SOME PROBLEMS IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS OF RAMANUJA

The Professor L. Venkataratnam Endowment Lectures
1975-'76

by

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R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

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1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1.1. *Scope of the Lectures*

Let me at the outset indicate the scope and aim of these lectures. The scope of these lectures is restricted to examining some problems in the epistemology and metaphysics of Rāmānuja. I do not propose to review and examine the theological aspects of Rāmānuja's thought. Quite a few scholars in recent times view Rāmānuja as a theologian. J. B. Carman, for example, has not only given the title "The Theology of Ramanuja" to his book, but has also devoted one full chapter to show why he considers Rāmānuja a theologian.[1] Characterising Rāmānuja as both an "orthodox theologian" and a "systematic theologian",[2] he points out that the non-Hindu interpreters of Rāmānuja are no more exclusively preoccupied with Rāmānuja's metaphysics. If Rāmānuja is to be described by a Western term, "theologian", observes Carman, is a more appropriate word than "philosopher".[3] Of course, Carman does not deny that

1. J. B. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja* (An Essay in Interreligious Understanding), New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1974, Chapter 16, pp. 199-211.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

Rāmānuja is in a significant sense a philosopher; but he considers him basically a theologian.[4]

We will not be doing justice to Rāmānuja if we just consider him a theologian. In the context of the uninformed criticism by some of the Western scholars that what is called "Indian Philosophy" is only theology and mysticism, one has to be careful about the use of the label "theology" to the thought of the Indian classical thinkers including Rāmānuja and Madhva. Consider, for instance, Swami Agehananda Bharati's remark. He says that the Western philosopher's criticism is directed chiefly against the usage of the word "philosophy" for Indian speculation; and he suggests that terms like theology, mysticism, metaphysics might be used in the place of philosophy with reference to Indian speculation.[5] It is, therefore, understandable why a scholar like Raghavachar objects to calling Rāmānuja a theologian.[6] The important issue involved here is whether philosophy becomes theology because of its acceptance of Scripture as a *pramāṇa* in addition to perception and inference. I do not propose to examine this issue here. What is to be borne in mind is that Rāmānuja accepts the validity of sense perception and reasoning in addition to the authority of Scripture and that his philosophical debate with other schools, heterodox as well as orthodox, Vedānta as well as non-Vedānta, is not restricted to the interpretation of the Scriptural texts. Taking a firm stand on logic and epistemology, Rāmānuja challenges his opponents. Just as the theological and devotional aspects of Rāmānuja's thought should not be ignored, even so the philosophical side of his thought should not be ignored. I think it will be appropriate to use the word "theism"

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

5. Swami Agehananda Bharati, *A Functional Analysis of Indian Thought and its Social Margins*, Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Volume XXXVII, 1964, p. 65. Also, 'Now is there a technical equivalent of *darśana* in the West? There are two, but neither of them is "philosophy". They are theology and mysticism—and we might say the Indian concept of *darśana* is a blend of the two ' (p. 54) Again, 'The Indian theologian will have to renounce *śabda* if he wants to be a philosopher. If he cannot dispense with it, he will remain in the old chair; he will remain a theologian.' (p. 37)

6. S. S. Raghavachar, *Introduction to Vedārthasaṅgraha of Rāmānujacharya*, Mysore, Second Edition, 1973, p. 4.

in the place of "theology" in the present context.[7] Rāmānuja's Scripture-based theism is fused with the philosophy of the Absolute; and his philosophical theism is sought to be justified by logic and epistemology. The role of Rāmānuja as a philosopher which is both important and significant is a landmark in the history of the schools of Vedānta.

It is no doubt true that Rāmānuja's philosophy is "synthetic" in several respects. Rāmānuja accepts the equal validity of all the three *pramāṇas*—perception, inference and verbal testimony—whose evidences, according to him, are coherent and not contradictory. On the metaphysical side, he reconciles the claims of monism and pluralism. The acceptance of the reality of the physical universe as well as the plurality of *jivas* is not, according to Rāmānuja, inconsistent with the oneness of Brahman. The ultimate reality is Brahman qualified by *cit* and *acit* (*cit-acit-viśiṣṭam-brahma*) both in the causal and effect state. One can also notice the synthetic character of Rāmānuja's philosophy in the scheme of the practical discipline formulated by him conjoining *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*. Notwithstanding the synthetic or inclusive character of his philosophy, there is a decisiveness in his philosophical stance which cannot and should not be ignored. This is obvious from his criticism of other schools of thought in the *Śrī-bhāṣya*, more particularly in his confrontation with Advaita in his commentary on the opening *sūtra* of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Carman seems to think that there is no justification for the prevalent impression that Rāmānuja's chief significance as a thinker lies in his effort to refute Advaita.[8] It is not for nothing that Rāmānuja engages himself in a protracted polemics with Advaita, covering the basic ideas of the Advaita doctrine and examining them in depth through the triple sources of knowledge, *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śabda*. He could have straight away explained the meanings of the

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7. P. N. Srinivasachari says: "Viśiṣṭādvaita is neither pure philosophy nor pure religion, but is really a philosophy of religion." See his *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, Madras: The Adyar Library, 1943, p. l. Srinivasachari's view cannot be accepted. One may characterise Viśiṣṭādvaita as both philosophy *and* religion and not as a philosophy of religion. A philosophy of religion is the study of the essential claims of all religions. Viśiṣṭādvaita cannot, therefore, be considered a philosophy of religion.

8. Carman, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

words *atha* (then) and *ataḥ* (therefore) contained in the opening *sūtra* indicating his difference from Śaṅkara's interpretation of these words. But this will not do for Rāmānuja. A full-scale philosophical debate with Advaita is absolutely necessary for him in his commentary on the very first *sūtra*. He can build his philosophical theism only after demolishing the structure of Advaita root and branch. Consequently he uses all his weapons in his armoury in his relentless and uncompromising philosophical fight with Advaita in his *mahāsiddhānta*. In view of the formidable position of Advaita confronting him, there is nothing "unusual" about the length of the *mahāsiddhānta*.[9] Rāmānuja is, indeed, at his best in his *mahāsiddhānta* compelling every subsequent Advaitin who came after him to take a close look at the Advaita position *vis-a-vis* the multipronged attack launched by Rāmānuja.[10] The epistemological and metaphysical position of Rāmānuja which emerges in the course of his philosophical debate with the Advaitin deserves careful consideration.

1.2. *Aim of the Lectures*

Rāmānuja who came after Śaṅkara must have known the objections which the latter levelled against the pluralism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the dualism-pluralism of Sāṅkhya. He must have also known the Advaita dialectics against difference (*bheda*) formulated by the teachers of Advaita who lived before his time. So his. philosophy must be viewed against the background of Advaita According to Rāmānuja, Brahman is one. But inasmuch as it is qualified by a plurality of *jīvas* and the physical universe which are real and different from it, the philosophical standpoint of Rāmānuja is pluralistic. Though organismically the three entities, *cit*, *acit*, and Brahman, are one, they are different from one another so far as their essential nature is concerned. The pluralism of Rāmānuja is no doubt different from the pluralism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika as well as the dualism-pluralism of Sāṅkhya.

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9. See Carman, *op. cit.*, p. 54: "The unusual thing about the *Śrībhāṣya* is the disproportionate length of the comment on the first *sūtra*, the greater part of which is called the Mahāsiddhānta."

10. See S. S. Raghavachar, *Visistadvaita*, Madras: The Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1977, pp. 23-24 for the significance of Rāmānuja's polemics with Advaita as contained in the *mahāsiddānta*.

In this context, the aim of these lectures is twofold: to find out whether Rāmānuja's pluralism is open to the same basic objections raised by Śaṅkara against Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya; and if the same objections do not hold good, what are the new objections against his position? This approach, it is hoped, will help one to get a clear picture of Rāmānuja's philosophy *vis-a-vis* Advaita. Objections are not stated here in the spirit of a sophist or a cantankerous disputant. The fruit of the method of sober criticism which will be followed here is clarity and understanding. Openness of mind and acceptance of the evidence of the *pramāṇas* will be our guiding principles.[11]

2. TWO DIFFERENT PICTURES

Four doctrines which stand out prominently in the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy of Rāmānuja are : (1) the doctrine that Brahman is *saguṇa*, (2) the doctrine of *satkāryavāda*, (3) the doctrine that *bhakti* is the means to release, and (4) the doctrine of *videhamukti*. The difference between Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita in respect of every one of these basic doctrines is obvious. While Advaita maintains that Brahman, the highest reality, is *nirguṇa* and *nirviṣeṣa*, Rāmānuja holds the view that the highest reality called Brahman or Īśvara is *saguṇa* and *saviseṣa*. Since it is inadmissible, according to Rāmānuja, to make the distinction between Brahman as *nirguṇa* and Brahman as *saguṇa*, there is absolutely no difference between Brahman and Īśvara in the philosophy of Rāmānuja. While Advaita explains the appearance of the world through *vivartavāda*, Rāmānuja makes use of *satkāryavāda* in this regard. As against the Advaita view that *jñāna* is the means to release, Rāmānuja considers *bhakti* to be the means to release. While Advaita accepts *jīvanmukti*, Rāmānuja argues for *videhamukti*. So the two pictures that we have here are quite different from each other in all the essential points notwithstanding the fact that both of them are classified under Vedānta.

3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL GROUNDING OF RĀMĀNUJA'S METAPHYSICS

3. 1. *The chief metaphysical category of Rāmānuja's philosophy*

Brahman is the central metaphysical category in the philosophy of Rāmānuja. *Cit* and *acit*, though real and ultimate, are absolutely

11. See Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, concluding verse.

dependent on Brahman in the same way as an attribute is dependent on a substance, or body on soul. *Cit* and *acit* do not and cannot exist apart from Brahman. They are, according to Rāmānuja, inseparably related to Brahman in such a way that all the three constitute an organic whole. The relation that obtains between Brahman on the one hand and *cit* and *acit* on the other is technically called *apṛthak-siddhi*.

3. 2. *All pramāṇas prove that every object of knowledge is saviśeṣa*

Rāmānuja holds the view that Brahman, the central metaphysical category, is *saguṇa, i.e.* what is qualified by attributes, and *saviśeṣa, i.e.* a differentiated being. Not only Brahman, but every object of our knowledge, declares Rāmānuja, is *saguṇa* and *saviśeṣa*; and there is no object which is *nirguṇa* or *nirviśeṣa.* Rāmānuja proceeds on the basis of the well-known principle, "*mānādhīnām meyasiddhiḥ*", which means "as the cognition, so the object"; that is, we determine the nature of the object by means of our cognition. Epistemology is the basis of metaphysics. It does not matter whether one comes to epistemology from metaphysics to which one is initially committed, or whether one comes to metaphysics through epistemology with which one starts. The fact remains that any metaphysical position has to be grounded in epistemology. It is, therefore, no wonder that Rāmānuja seeks to justify his basic metaphysical view that Brahman is *saguṇa* and *saviśeṣa* by means of epistemology. It will not be possible to gain an insight into the philosophical theism of Rāmānuja — what some contemporary scholars characterize as the "theology" of Rāmānuja probably to hold on to the metaphysical superstructure ignoring the epistemological substructure — without paying attention to its epistemological base. The strength of Rāmānuja's metaphysics must lie in the strength of his epistemological standpoint. The weakness of his epistemology will reflect badly on his metaphysics. If so, we have to consider how far his epistemology is sound. Rāmānuja tries to justify his conception of Brahman on the ground that every *pramāṇa* conveys the knowledge of an object which is only *saviśeṣa* (*saviśeṣavastu-viṣayatvāt sarvapramāṇānām*).[12] It means that neither perception nor inference nor verbal testimony can be cited as

12. Rāmānuja, *Śrī-bhāṣya*, Ed. Uttamur Viraraghavacharya, Madras, 1963, p. 48.

an evidence for the existence of an object which is *nirviśeṣa.* Referring to the Advaita view at the commencement of the *mahāsiddhānta,* Rāmānuja says that "this theory must needs be rejected by all those who, through perception and other means of knowledge, supported by sound reasoning, have an insight into the true nature of things".[13] We have, therefore, to examine this important claim of Rāmānuja that all *pramāṇas* — perception, inference, and verbal testimony — reveal objects which are only *saviśeṣa.*

4. RĀMĀNUJA'S CLAIM THAT THE OBJECT OF PERCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE IS SAVIŚEṢA

4.1. *Distinction between nirvikalpaka and savikalpaka*

Let us first consider Rāmānuja's claim that the object known through perception is *saviśeṣa.* Rāmānuja accepts the classification of perception into indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*) and determinate (*savikalpaka*). The content of both of them, according to him, is only *saviśeṣa.* The point at issue is not about the nature of the content of *savikalpakapratyakṣa.* That the object of determinate perception is *saviśeṣa* is accepted by the Naiyāyika, the Mīmāṁsaka, and the Advaitin as well as by the Viśiṣṭādvaitin. There are two questions to be considered in respect of Rāmānuja's explanation of both indeterminate and determinate perception. The first is whether the object of indeterminate perception is *saviśeṣa* as claimed by him. Though both the kinds of perception reveal an object which is *saviśeṣa,* nevertheless there is, according to Rāmānuja, an important distinction between the two. So the second question to be considered is whether the distinction between indeterminate and determinate perception drawn by him is tenable.

The two kinds of perception called *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka* are, according to Rāmānuja, only two stages in perception. The first stage in perception called *nirvikalpaka* is followed by the second stage called *savikalpaka.* Rāmānuja says that indeterminate perception is the apprehension of an object for the first time (*prathama-piṇḍa-grahaṇam*). When a person perceives a cow for the first time, he perceives it as qualified by a certain attribute, a certain shape, and

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13. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 48: "*nyāyānugṛhīta-pratyakṣādi-sakalapramāṇavṛtta-yāthātmyavidbhiḥ anādaraṇīyam.*"

so on. The object perceived at this stage is a differentiated one, because there is the apprehension, "This object is such" (*idam ittham*). The perceptual knowledge which arises at this stage can be expressed in the form of a judgment involving subject-predicate relation. Further, it is quite possible to act on the basis of this knowledge. Also, it is a valid cognition conducive to the transaction of our business of life. It has, therefore, truth value. Since the object is apprehended as qualified in a particular way even when it is perceived for the first time, it is wrong to say, according to Rāmānuja, that in *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* the object is perceived as bereft of qualities.

What, then, is *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, according to Rāmānuja? And how does it differ from *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*? After seeing a cow for the first time, a person, let us say, sees another cow. The second or subsequent apprehension of a cow is termed *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. While in *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* there is apprehension of an object as qualified in a particular way, in *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* there is not only the apprehension of the object as qualified, but also the apprehension of the generic character as a continuance from the object perceived first of all. For example, when a person perceives a cow for the first time, he perceives it as characterized by the special feature, *viz* the triangularly shaped dewlap (*trikoṇa-sāsnādi-saṁsthāna*), but he does not know at this stage that this special feature continues to be present in another cow. Only when he perceives a second cow, he is able to have the knowledge of the extension of this special feature. In other words, while the knowledge of the generic feature is not possible in the *nirvikalpaka* stage, it becomes possible in the *savikalpaka* stage. The object apprehended in both the stages is *saviśeṣa*; and there is *definite* knowledge of the object as such-and-such in both the stages. However, while the object apprehended in the *nirvikalpaka* stage is new, the object apprehended in the *savikalpaka* stage is familiar, because it is the apprehension of a second object belonging to the same class (*ekajātīyadravyeṣu dvitīya-piṇḍa-grahaṇam*).[14]

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14. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 51: "*nirvikalpakam ekajātīyadravyeṣu prathamapiṇḍagrahaṇam, dvitīyādipiṇḍagrahaṇam savikalpakam ityucyate: tatra prathamapiṇḍagrahaṇe gotvāderanuvṛttākāratā na pratīyate; dvitīyādipiṇḍagrahaṇeṣveva anuvṛttipratītiḥ.*"

4.2. *Rāmānuja's view of nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa compared with the Nyāya view*

It will be of interest to compare Rāmānuja's explanation of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* with the Nyāya view on the one hand and with the Advaita view on the other in this regard. Rāmānuja's explanation of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* differs from the Nyāya explanation in many respects. According to the Naiyāyika, *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* stands for non-relational knowledge of something; but according to Rāmānuja, it stands for relational knowledge of the object presented. Second, while no judgment in the form of subject-predicate relation is possible at the *nirvikalpaka* stage according to the Naiyāyika, it is quite possible according to Rāmānuja; and the subject-predicate relation apprehended at this stage can also be expressed through language. Third, while the Naiyāyika holds that the knowledge at *nirvikalpaka* stage is neither true nor false because it does not possess any practical value,[15] Rāmānuja maintains that knowledge at this stage has truth value, since it is conducive to the practical interests of life. Fourth, according to the Naiyāyika, the *nirvikalpaka* stage cannot be directly experienced; it has to be inferred from *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa.*[16] But according to Rāmānuja, it is directly experienced. Fifth, while the Naiyāyika would say that there is qualitative difference between *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka,* Rāmānuja would say that the difference between the two is one of degree; for in both the cases the object is apprehended as *saviśeṣa.* The additional feature, *viz* the knowledge of the generic feature, present in *savikalpaka* does not make it qualitatively different from *nirvikalpaka* according to Rāmānuja.

4.3. *Rāmānuja's view of nirvikalpaka compared with the Advaita view*

According to Advaita, while *savikalpaka* is relational knowledge of the perceived object, *nirvikalpaka* is non-relational knowledge of an object which is perceived.[17] When I say, on perceiving the given

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15. The author of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* says: "*nirvikalpakañca pramāpramā-bahirbhūtameva, vyavahāra anaṅgatvāt.*" (*Pratyakṣa-khāṇḍa*, p. 402).

16. "*Jñānam yannirvikalpākhyam tadatīndriyam iṣyate.*"

17. See Dharmaraja Adhvarin, *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, Ed. S. S. S. Sastri, The Adyar Library, 1942, pp. 26-27 : "*tatra savikalpakam vaiśiṣṭyāvagāhi jñānam, yathā 'ghaṭamaham jānāmi' ityādi jñānam, nirvikalpakam tu samsargānavagāhi jñānam, yathā 'so'yam devadattaḥ', 'tattvamasi' ityādivākyajanyam jñānam.*"

object, "This is a cow," the perceptual knowledge which I have is *savikalpaka*. It is relational knowledge of the given object (*vaiśiṣṭyāvagāhi jñānam*). If on perceiving Devadatta for the second time I say, "This is that Devadatta," I have perceptual knowledge which is *nirvikalpaka*. In this case, I have knowledge of the identity or oneness of the person whom I perceive. It is non-relational knowledge (*saṁsarga-anavagāhi jñānam*) of the perceived object.

In the light of the above explanation of *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* from the standpoint of Advaita, it is obvious that both Rāmānuja aud the Advaitin agree (1) that knowledge at the *nirvikalpaka* stage involves judgment which can be expressed through language, (2) that we act on the basis of this *nirvikalpaka* knowledge, (3) and that the judgment at this stage has, therefore, truth value. However, the points of difference between Rāmānuja and the Advaitin in this regard are much more important than the points of agreement. While the Advaitin holds the view that the perceptual knowledge which is termed *nirvikalpaka* is non-relational, Rāmānuja says that it is relational. Secondly, while, according to Rāmānuja, the difference between *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is one of degree, there is qualitative difference between the two according to the Advaitin. There is yet another point of difference between Rāmānuja and the Advaitin. Like the Naiyāyika and the Mīmāṁsaka, Rāmānuja also holds the view that *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is preceded by *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. The above sequence is reversed by the Advaitin. The identity judgment, "This is that Devadatta," which expresses *nirvikalpaka* knowledge is preceded by the relational judgment, "This is Devadatta," which conveys *savikalpaka* knowledge.

5. THE OBJECT OF NIRVIKALPAKA-PRATYAKṢA CANNOT BE SAVIŚEṢA

That the object of *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is *saviśeṣa*, is beyond dispute. The Naiyāyikas, the Mīmāṁsakas, and the Advaitins are in agreement with Rāmānuja on this issue. However, Rāmānuja's contention that the object of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is also *saviśeṣa* is untenable. Perceptual knowledge is called *nirvikalpaka* on the basis of the object known with which it is related. If the object known

involves distinctions (*vikalpa*), then the perceptual knowledge of which it is the content is termed *savikalpaka.* If, on the contrary, the object known is free from distinction (*nirvikalpa*), then the resulting knowledge is called *nirvikalpaka.* So if we consider the connotation of the terms "*vikalpa*" and "*nirvikalpa*" we will understand why we call one kind of perception *nirvikalpaka* and the other *savikalpaka.* What, then, are the distinguishing features of an object? One object is distinguished from another by means of the generic feature, particular qualities, name, etc., and these distinguishing features are called "*vikalpa*". Rāmānuja says, "The apprehension of the first individual among a number of things belonging to the same class is *nirvikalpaka*" (*nirvikalpakam ekajātīyadravyeṣu prathamapiṇḍa-grahaṇam*). This view, however, cannot be accepted. It does not matter whether an object of a particular class is seen for the first time or not. But what matters is whether the object is seen with the distinguishing features or not. If it is apprehended as possessing a certain quality (*guṇa*), a certain shape or configuration (*saṁsthāna*), and so on, then it is a complex entity which is the object of perceptual knowledge. In so far as an object is perceived along with its *vikalpas* or distinguishing features (*e.g.* "This object is white," "This animal possesses a particular part which is of a particular shape," and so on), the resulting perceptual knowledge can only be called *savikalpaka*, even though the object is seen for the first time. It is a misnomer to use the term *nirvikalpaka* in the case of perception whose content is admitted to be *saviśeṣa, i.e.* what possesses *vikalpas* or distinctions. So the basic objection is that the so-called *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* of Rāmānuja is but *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa.*[18] That the content of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is only *saviśeṣa* and not *nirviśeṣa*, has not been proved by Rāmānuja.

In the light of what has been said above there is no justification for Rāmānuja's observation that "indeterminate perception is the apprehension of an object as bereft of some distinctions and not of all distinctions and that the apprehension of the latter kind neither takes place nor is tenable." Experience of deep sleep (*suṣupti*) disproves Rāmānuja's claim. In deep sleep all of us have the experience of the

18. What the Naiyāyika says is worth noting. He says : "*niṣprakārakam jñānam nirvikalpakam*" and "*saprakārakam jñānam savikalpakam*". See Annambhatta, *Tarkasaṅgraha, Pratyakṣa-pariccheda.*

Self or consciousness as devoid of all distinctions. Further, the state of *nirvikalpaka-samādhi* experienced by the wise also disproves Rāmānuja's observation.[19]

We will now consider whether the distinction between the *nirvikalpaka* stage and the *savikalpaka* stage of perception drawn by Rāmānuja is tenable. Though the object perceived in both the stages is *saviśeṣa*, in the later stage there is knowledge of the generic feature as what extends from the first member of the class seen earlier to the second member of the class seen now; and this knowledge, says Rāmānuja, is absent in the first stage of perception. If so, the earlier and later stages of perception should not be called *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka* respectively, for these terms do not bring out the real difference between them. Rather they should be termed respectively *nirānuvṛttika-pratyakṣa*, *i. e.* perception in which the continuance or *anuvṛtti* of the generic feature is not noted, and *sānuvṛttika-pratyakṣa* *i. e.* perception in which the *anuvṛtti* of the generic feature is noted, in consonance with the distinction between the two as drawn by Rāmānuja. In the context of such a peculiar distinction drawn by him, it is a misnomer to call them *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka*.[20]

There is yet another difficulty. A person, let us say, sees an object, *e.g.* a cow, for the first time. When he sees another cow subsequently, he does not have, let us say, the impression (*samskāra*) in his mind caused by the perception of the cow earlier, and so when he sees it, the sight of it is not accompanied by the revival of the former impression, In the absence of the revival of the former impression, it will not be possible for the person to have the knowledge of the generic feature when he sees a cow again, the second individual of the same class. If so, the perception of the second individual of the class (*dvitīyapiṇḍa-grahaṇa*) cannot be termed *savikalpaka*, as held by Rāmānuja.[21]

The point which emerges from the foregoing criticism is this: though Rāmānuja calls the two stages of perception *nirvikalpaka* and

19. See Rāmarāyakavi, *Śrī Śaṅkarāśaṅkara-bhāṣya-vimarśaḥ*, Guntur, 1953, p. 33.

20. Vāsudevaśāstri, *Advaitāmodaḥ*, Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series, No. 84, p. 73.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

savikalpaka, both of them, when judged from the nature of the object known to which they are related, should be called *savikalpaka*. Rāmānuja fails to achieve the aim he has in view in spite of using the familiar term, *nirvikalpaka*, in the unfamiliar sense.

6. RĀMĀNUJA'S CLAIM THAT THE OBJECT KNOWN THROUGH INFERENCE IS ALSO SAVIŚEṢA

Though inference is a separate *pramāṇa*, it is dependent on *pratyakṣa* for its very genesis. An inference has to fulfil two conditions. The first is the cognition of the *hetu* (middle term) in the *pakṣa* (minor term). The second is the knowledge of *vyāpti* or relation of invariable concomitance between the *hetu* and the *sādhya* (major term). The first condition which insists on the perception of the *pakṣa* as characterized by the *hetu* clearly brings out the dependence of inference on perception. Since the object known through perception is *saviśeṣa*, inference too, argues Rāmānuja, which is connected with the object known through perception, can be a source of knowledge of an object which also is *saviśeṣa*.[22]

7. REFUTATION OF THE ABOVE CLAIM

7.1. *Wrong assumption*

Rāmānuja proceeds on the assumption that the object known through perception is only *saviśeṣa*. But this assumption is wrong. It is not denied that we get knowledge of an object which is *saviśeṣa* through perception. What is claimed by the Advaitin is that perception also reveals the existence of *nirviśeṣa-vastu*. The Advaitin cites, as stated earlier, the case of deep sleep which is perceptual experience as the evidence for the Self which is *nirviśeṣa*. Let us consider this in some detail.

7.2. *Evidence of deep sleep perceptual experience*

When a person recollects his deep sleep experience, he says that he was not aware of anything, subjective or objective, and that he was not aware of even himself as such-and-such at that time.

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22. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 52 : "*ataḥ pratyakṣasya saviśeṣaviṣayatvena pratyakṣādi-dṛṣṭasambandha-viśiṣṭaviṣayatvāt anumānamapi saviśeṣaviṣayameva.*"

Recollection presupposes the prior experience of what is recollected. What is experienced in deep sleep is the bare Self or consciousness devoid of distinctions. We may convey the same idea differently. Consciousness which persists in deep sleep is not *intentional* The state of deep sleep is not a knowledge situation in the sense in which waking and dream states, due to the work of the mind and the senses, are said to be knowledge situation. Knower-known relation is absent at that time. When the subject-object relation itself is absent, it cannot be said that the object is known as a differentiated entity at that time. It cannot be said that the Self, though a differentiated entity, is not known that way during deep sleep because of the absence of the functioning of the mind. The claim that the Self is a differentiated entity, though it is not apprehended to be such at that time due to the absence of the mind, cannot be sustained, for whatever claim we make about a thing must be on the basis of apprehension.[23]

The perceptual knowledge or experience which a person has during deep sleep may be characterized as *nirvikalpaka*. It is the non-relational knowledge in which the three factors (*tripuṭī*), *viz* cognizer, the cognized and cognition, are absent. It is only when a person wakes up from deep sleep, recollects his experience, and gives expression to what he has experienced in the form, "I did not see anything whatsoever; I did not know even myself; I slept happily," that the *tripuṭī* involving cognizer-cognized-cognition relation manifests itself.[24] The *tripuṭī*, however, is absent in the state of deep sleep. The Advaitin, no doubt, admits the existence of the Witness-self, happiness, and *avidyā-vṛtti* during *suṣupti*. But there is no relational knowledge at that time. For example, when I cognize a pot in the waking state I give expression to my experience in the form of a judgment involving the three factors. The three factors are so united as to form one relational knowledge (*viśiṣṭa-vṛttijñāna*), expressed through a judgment, *e.g.* "I cognize a pot." Such a knowledge is *savikalpaka*. Since there is no *viśiṣṭa-vṛttijñāna* in deep sleep, it is termed *nirvikalpaka-jñāna*. It is an experience where neither "*aham*" (I) nor

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23. See Rāmarāyakavi, *op. cit.*, p. 32; "...*mana-ādi-karaṇābhāvāt tadgata-viśeṣāgrahaṇamiti cet, maivam, agṛhītaviśeṣasadbhāve pramāṇābhāvāt*".

24. Rāmarāyakavi, *op. cit.*, p. 39 : "...*smaraṇasamaya eva tripuṭī pratibhānam*".

"*idam*" (this) is manifest.[25] What is experienced here is the bare Self bereft of distinctions. The Advaitin, therefore, cites the perceptual experience of deep sleep as proof for the existence of *nirviśeṣavastu*. The point to be noted here is that this perceptual experience given to every one of us is in consonance with the testimony of the *śruti* text which says that the Self is "one only without a second"[26] (*ekameva advitīyam*) bringing out the absence of *sajātīya*, *vijātiya* and *svagata-bheda* in the Self.

7.3. *Inference in support of Nirviśeṣa-Brahman*

That Brahman which is the source of the world is *nirviśeṣa* can be proved by means of inference. It is well-known that whatever is particular characterized by name and form arises from what is more general or universal than it. For instance, a pot and a pan which are particulars are the effects of clay which is *sāmānya* or the general, when compared with the former, which are *viśeṣas* or particulars.[27] The particular points to the universal. The argument can be formulated as follows :

> This world has for its source Brahman or Being which is general.
>
> Because it is a particular.
>
> Whatever is a particular arises from the general.

Brahman or Being is the highest universal (*mahāsāmānya*). It is infinite. There is nothing higher or more universal than that. The world of name and form is *viśeṣa*, just as pot and pan are *viśeṣas*; and its cause is Brahman which, being the highest *sāmānya*, is devoid of distinctions.

The following argument also shows that Brahman is *nirviśeṣa*:

> Brahman-Ātman is *nirviśeṣa*.
>
> Because it is experienced without qualities and distinctions in *suṣupti*.

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25. Rāmarāyakavi, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-40.

26. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI, ii, 1.

27. The *vyāpti* can be stated as follows: "*yo yo viśeṣaḥ sa sa sāmānyaprakṛtikaḥ, yathā ghaṭa-śarāvādayastatsāmānya-bhūta-mṛt-prakṛtikā.*" See *Advaitāmoda*, pp. 71 and 74.

Whatever is experienced without qualities and distinctions is *nirviśeṣa,* pot being the negative example (*vyatireka-dṛṣṭ-ānta*).

8. RĀMĀNUJA'S CLAIM THAT ŚABDA REVEALS SAVIŚEṢA-VASTU

Rāmānuja argues that *śabda* also conveys knowledge of a differentiated entity.[28] He employs two kinds of argument, There is first of all a general argument based on the nature of *śabda* as a source of knowledge. This is followed by a specific argument in the form of a detailed examination of some of the Scriptural texts for the purpose of vindicating that *śruti, smṛti,* and *purāṇa* teach that Brahman, the highest reality, is *nirviśeṣa.*

8.1. *General argument*

The general argument formulated by Rāmānuja is as follows. *Śabda* or verbal testimony which is admitted to be a *pramāṇa* functions through words and sentences. A word which conveys some meaning consists of a stem (*prakṛti*) and a suffix (*pratyaya*). Since the meanings conveyed by the stem and the suffix are different, an individual word which is a combination of these two must needs convey a relational meaning (*viśiṣṭārtha*). If this is the case with regard to an individual word, it follows that a sentence which consists of a group of words will also convey a relational sense. So Rāmānuja concludes that neither a word nor a sentence is capable of denoting an object which is *nirviśeṣa.*[29]

8.2. *Refutation of the general argument*

Rāmānuja's argument is not convincing. It is an accepted principle that for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning of a word or a sentence we have to take into consideration the intention of the speaker who utters the word or the sentence (or the context in which it occurs where the speaker is not known). It is wrong to construe the meaning of a word or a sentence by ignoring this important factor. What a word or a sentence purports to convey is, indeed, its meaning.

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28. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 50: "*śabdasya tu viśeṣeṇa eva vastuni abhidhānasāmarthyam.*"

29. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 50.

The principle is: *"yatparaśśabdaḥ sa śabdārthaḥ"*. It may be that in some cases it purports to convey a relational sense, and in some other cases a non-relational sense. We can only say that it all depends on what is intended to be conveyed. There is no ruling that the purport of a word or a sentence must always be a relational sense (*saṁsṛṣṭārtha* or *viśiṣṭārtha*).

Consider the following case. No sooner did my friend tell me that he would dine with someone whom I know to be of an undesirable character than I shouted, "You eat poison". What is the meaning of the sentence "You eat poison" (*viṣam bhuṅkṣva*) uttered by me? Did I mean that he should eat poison? No. I expressed through this sentence my disapproval of what he proposed to do. The purport of my sentence is that he should not eat the food provided by that person.[30] We cannot construe this meaning from the sentence by just considering, as Rāmānuja would suggest, the meanings of the *prakṛti* and the *pratyaya* of the words used therein.[31] So we must say that the purport (*tātparya*) which is intended to be conveyed is the meaning of a sentence.

The purport may be a relational or a non-relational sense. For example, we say that the sentence, "This flower is red," conveys a relational sense, because this is the meaning intended to be conveyed here. But the sentence, "This is that Devadatta," conveys a non-relational sense, *i.e.* the sense of identity or oneness of the person, because this is the purport intended to be conveyed here. The sentence means that Devadatta who is seen in *this* place, at *this* time is identical with Devadatta who was seen in *that* place, at *that* time. The identity is in respect of the person concerned and not with regard to place and time which are the determinants of the person. The place where he was seen earlier is different from the place where he is seen now. Similarly the time when he was seen earlier is different from the present time when he is seen. It is absurd to say that that Devadatta as qualified by one set of determinants (*i.e.* Devadatta-of-

30. The sentence means: *"śatru gṛhe bhojanaṁ mā kuru"*.

31. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 35: *"viṣam bhuṅkṣveti vākyāt pratīyamānasya śatrugṛhabhojananivṛttirūpārthasya na viṣabhujiprakṛtyarthatvam. nāpi taduttaravartyamādi-pratyayārthatvamiti, prakṛtipratyayārthātirikta arthabodhakatvāt tadvākyasya."*

the-past-time-and-place) is identical with this Devadatta as qualified by another set of determinants (*i.e.* Devadatta-of-the-present-time-and-place). So we have to drop the two sets of incompatible determinants and retain the bare substantive, *viz* Devadatta. The meaning intended to be conveyed by this sentence is oneness or identity of the person concerned.

There are also instances in which we try to convey the knowledge of the bare entity (*vastumātram*) by means of a word. A person, let us say, knows already the word "jar"; and he also knows that a jar is an object which has a particular shape and other features. But he is not able to identify the jar when it is kept along with other objects. With the intention of knowing it, he asks: "Which is the jar ?" Someone, drawing his attention to the jar through the help of a stick, utters the word "jar"; and the word, when uttered, helps him to know the jar, *i.e.* he gets the knowledge of the bare object. It is to be borne in mind that the enquirer wants to know *which* the jar is and not *what* the jar is. He is desirous of knowing the entity alone, the bare substantive (*viśeṣya*) and not the substantive with its *viśeṣaṇa* or qualification. Also the speaker who utters the word "jar" in this context intends to convey the knowledge of the bare entity; and the word that he utters serves the purpose. It means that the word "jar" in this case conveys a non-relational sense.

It is no argument to say that the word "jar" conveys the knowledge of an object which is *viśiṣṭa* inasmuch as the object denoted by it has a name, a particular shape, and other features. *Śabda* is a *pramāṇa* only in respect of what is not known (*anadhigatārtha*).[32] The enquirer already knows the word "jar". When he sees this object along with others, he gets the perceptual knowledge of the peculiar shape and other features of the object. So the word "jar" in the context conveys the knowledge of the bare object alone. Since the enquirer already knows the *viśeṣaṇa* such as the shape, it is wrong to say that the word conveys to him the knowledge of both the *viśeṣaṇa* and the *viśeṣya*. Though the word "jar" normally denotes an object which is *viśiṣṭa*, *i.e.* a differentiated entity, nevertheless in the context of what is intended to be conveyed we have to say that it conveys the knowledge of the substantive alone.

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32. *anadhigatārthe hi śabdasya tātparyam aṅgīkartavyam prāmāṇyāya.*

It will be of interest to consider a parallel case presented by the Naiyāyika. According to the Naiyāyika, the sentence, "Jar is non-eternal" (*ghaṭo anityaḥ*) conveys the sense that the particular jar (*vyaktibhūtam ghaṭam*) is non-eternal. It does not mean that the universal "jarness" is non-eternal. How does the Naiyāyika construe this meaning from the sentence ? According to him, the universal or *jāti* is eternal. Further, the primary meaning of a word is a universalized particular (*jāti-viśiṣṭa-vyakti*), *i.e.* a particular associated with the universal. It means that the word "jar" means both the particular and the universal. In the sentence "*ghaṭo anityaḥ*" the word "*ghaṭa*" must be construed with the word "*anitya*". Though the word "*ghaṭa*" denotes the particular qualified by the universal, nevertheless because of the presence of another word "*anitya*" with which it has to be construed, we say that the word "*ghaṭa*" means only a particular jar. Such an interpretation wherein avoiding all reference to *jāti* we retain the meaning of *vyakti* is, according to the Naiyāyika, warranted by the context. In the same way, by the force of *tātparya*, the Advaitin argues, the word "jar" means only the bare substantive (*viśeṣyamātram*) and the enquirer who is desirous of knowing the bare object gets this knowledge from the word. So it is wrong to say that *śabda*, whether it is in the form of a single word or in the form of a sentence, necessarily conveys a relational sense.

It is true that the stem and the suffix have different meanings. It may also be conceded that a word is capable of conveying a relational sense. But this does not warrant Rāmānuja's generalization that a word as well as a sentence *always* conveys a relational sense. The deciding factor is *tātparya*. If the purport intended to be conveyed by a word or a sentence is non-relational, we have to say that it conveys a non-relational sense.[33]

8.3. *The need for specific argument : Exegesis of Scripture*

The refutation of the general argument that *śabda* by its very nature is capable of denoting an object which is *saviśeṣa* does not invalidate, but only weakens the specific argument; for Rāmānuja may still argue that all Scriptural texts teach that Brahman, the supreme reality, is *saviśeṣa* and not *nirviśeṣa*. If the criticism of the

33. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid*., p. 35.

general argument is sound, Rāmānuja certainly cannot argue that *śabda* always denotes an object which is *saviśeṣa*, that Scripture is *śabda*, and that Scripture, therefore, conveys the knowledge of *saviśeṣa-vastu*. But it is open to him to argue that Scripture which is the source of knowledge of Brahman reveals it as *saviśeṣa*. In fact, Rāmānuja's exegesis of Scripture may be considered independently of the general argument relating to the nature of the object revealed by *śabda*. It is, therefore, necessary to examine Rāmānuja's interpretation of Scripture to find out whether his claim that Scripture teaches Brahman to be *nirviśeṣa* is tenable.

8.4. *Refutation of Rāmānuja's interpretation of some Scriptural texts*

It will not be possible here to consider one by one the interpretation of all the important Scriptural texts given by Rāmānuja. It is enough if we take up some key texts which have a direct bearing on the question whether Brahman is *nirguṇa* or *saguṇa* and examine Rāmānuja's exegesis of these texts.

8.4.1. *The meaning of the Taittirīya text*, II, *i*, 1

It is said that Rāmānuja relies on the grammar of *sāmānādhikaraṇya* for the purpose of establishing through Scripture that Brahman is *saviśeṣa*. Let us, therefore, consider the *Taittirīya* text, "Brahman is real, knowledge and infinite," (*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*) which is relevant in this connection.

Rāmānuja says that the text, "Brahman is real, knowledge, and infinite," shows that Brahman is qualified by attributes, *viz satyam*, *jñānam*, and *anantam* and that it is, therefore, wrong to say on the basis of this text that Brahman is devoid of attributes. He adduces two arguments in support of his view. His first argument is based on the grammatical rule of co-ordinate relation (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*). There is co-ordinate relation among the three words, "*satyam*", "*jñānam*", and "*anantam*". Rāmānuja argues that words which are in co-ordinate relation denote one thing as qualified by several attributes.[34] We also notice that the three words here are not synonyms, and that each of them is used for a specific reason. If so, we have

34. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 79: "*pravṛttinimittabhedena ekārthavṛttitvam hi sāmānādhikaraṇyam.*"

to say that the three words which qualify "Brahman" refer to the qualities which inhere in Brahman. Rāmānuja gives another argument in support of his position. He says that the words "*satyam*" "*jñānam*" and "*anantam*" are not used to state the essential nature of Brahman. If the text purports to set forth the essential nature, it can do so by just one word; and in that case the usage of other words would be purposeless.[35] But different words which are in co-ordination have been used for different reasons in the text. Rāmānuja, therefore, concludes that this *Taittirīya* text states the defining attributes of Brahman, and that the latter which is endowed with attributes is *saguṇa*. It is argued that there is an advantage on the side of Rāmānuja if this text is interpreted as attributive in character. Without resorting to the secondary sense (*lakṣaṇā*), we can take the text in the primary sense (*mukhyārtha*) if we construe the words in the sense of the defining attributes of Brahman. It is an accepted principle that, where the primary sense holds good, one should not resort to the secondary sense.

Rāmānuja's arguments are untenable. The *Taittirīya* text, "*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*" conveys the knowledge of Brahman only indirectly through the secondary sense and not directly through the primary sense. The very fact that the words in this text are in co-ordinate relation is the reason for construing the meaning of this text through the secondary sense. We cannot take the primary sense of these words which are in co-ordinate relation, because the three words — real, knowledge and infinite — which are used as a definition of Brahman do not go together, and hence the difficulty in adopting the primary sense of these words.

Let us first consider the definition that "Brahman is knowledge" (*jñānam brahma*). Knowledge or *jñāna*, as ordinarily understood, has a beginning and an end, for one cognition is followed by another cognition. It is also finite, because it is different from both the knower and the known. If Brahman is defined as knowledge, and if knowledge, as ordinarily understood, is both temporary and finite, it makes no sense to apply the words "*satyam*" and "*anantam*" to

35. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 79 : "*ekenaiva padena svarūpam pratipannamiti padāntaraprayoga-vaiyarthyāt*."

Brahman. So we cannot take all the three words in their primary sense and construe them with the word "Brahman". The same difficulty arises if we examine the other two words, "*satyam*" and "*anantam*". An entity, *e g*. ether, as understood in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, may be both real and infinite; but it is not of the nature of knowledge. It means that, even if Brahman is said to be real and infinite, it need not be of the nature of knowledge. Further, even if we say that knowledge is real in the sense that it leads to the accomplishment of some end, we cannot say, so far as our ordinary experience goes, that it is infinite. It means that even if Brahman is knowledge and real, it cannot be infinite. In short, we cannot take the primary sense of these three words which are in co-ordinate relation. So the text, "*satyam jñānam anantam brahma*" which states the definition of Brahman has to be understood only in the secondary sense.[36]

The three words "*satyam*" "*jñānam*" and "*anantam*" are not synonyms. Each of them has been used for a specific reason. They serve to differentiate Brahman from things empirical which we know. The word '*satyam*" is used to differentiate Brahman from what is not real; the word "*jñānam*" shows that Brahman is different from things insentient; and the word "*anantam*" serves to distinguish Brahman from finite things. Since this text conveys the knowledge of Brahman indirectly by negating the unreal, the insentient and the finite from it, it is wrong to say that it refers to Brahman as *saguṇa* or *saviśeṣa*.

8.4.2. *The Meaning of the Nirguṇa-texts*

Let us now consider another text. There is a text of the *Śvetāśvatara*, VI, 11, which says speaking of the supreme Being that He is "the witness, the knower, the only one, devoid of qualities" (*sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca*). Rāmānuja says that texts which speak of Brahman as *nirguṇa* do not convey the idea that Brahman is devoid of qualities; but they only deny the profane or evil qualities (*heyaguṇas*) associated with *prakṛti*.[37] There is no conflict between the texts which say that Brahman has qualities and those which declare Brahman to be without qualities. Drawing a distinction between qualities which are sacred and those which are profane,

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36. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid*., p. 157.
37. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 91.

Rāmānuja argues that while *saguṇa*-texts affirm the presence of sacred qualities (*kalyāṇa-guṇas*) in Brahman, the *nirguṇa*-texts deny the absence of profane qualities (*heya-guṇas*) in Brahman.

There is difficulty in accepting Rāmānuja's interpretation of *nirguṇa*-texts. The *Śvetāśvatara* text quoted above merely says that Brahman is *nirguṇa*. The term "*nirguṇa*" occurs in the text without any qualification. In the absence of any qualifying term used for the purpose of restricting the scope and force of the meaning of the term "*nirguṇa*", there is no justification for saying that the term "*nirguṇa*" means "without evil qualities associated with *prakṛti*" (*prākṛtaheya-guṇas*). There is double fault in Rāmānuja's interpretation: there is *śruta-hāni* as well as *aśruta-kalpanā*. He ignores the plain meaning of the term "*nirguṇa*" and suggests, by reading into the term, a meaning which is not warranted. The *Upaniṣad* only says that Brahman is without qualities; it does not say that it is without such-and-such qualities.

Let us examine the issue in another way. The *nirguṇa*-text, it is admitted, denies qualities of Brahman. It is an accepted principle that what is affirmed alone can be denied. If qualities are to be denied of Brahman, they must first be affirmed of Brahman. On what ground are we to predicate qualities of Brahman? It cannot be on the basis of perception, because Brahman, the trans-empirical reality, is not an object of perception in the sense in which stocks and stones are objects of perception. However, it will be possible to predicate qualities of Brahman by means of inference. One may argue that, since Brahman is the source, support and end of the world, it must be in possession of qualities such as omniscience, omnipotence, and so on which are necessary for creating the world. Here we proceed from the effect to the cause. We infer these qualities of Brahman from the world which is the effect. But we do not infer the presence of evil qualities (*heya-guṇas*) in Brahman. Since there is no possibility of affirming the *heya-guṇas* of Brahman, the question of denying them by means of *nirguṇa*-texts does not arise.[38] Rāmānuja assigns to the *nirguṇa*-texts a work which they cannot and need not perform. The Advaita explanation that the

38. Vāsudevaśāstri, *ibid.*, p. 69.

nirguṇa-texts show that Brahman is without qualities is simple and straight. A quality which is affirmed first, but denied subsequently, of a thing cannot be essential to it. The essential quality of an object can never be denied. What is denied must have been falsely predicated of a thing. The real can never be denied. Brahman-in-itself is *nirguṇa*. Qualities are superimposed on it when it is viewed from the empirical point of view as the cause of the world. When the empirical realm itself is false (*mithyā*), the qualities which are ascribed to Brahman in relation to, and as an explanation of, the empirical order cannot be but false. The real position is that Brahman is without qualities; and it is this idea that is conveyed by the *nirguṇa*-texts.

Earlier reference was made to the principle that the particular (*viśeṣa*) arises from the general (*sāmānya*) and that Brahman is the highest *sāmānya*. Since Brahman is admitted to be the ultimate cause of the world, it must be *nirviśeṣa*. If it is *saviśeṣa*, it will require a cause which is more general than it; and if the latter is also *saviśeṣa*, it will also require a cause which is more general than it; and this causal search will go on till we arrive at that which is *nirviśeṣa*. Since there is nothing higher than Brahman, and since Brahman is the first cause of the world, it must be admitted to be *nirguṇa* and *nirviseṣa*. It is this basic idea that is conveyed by the *nirguṇa*-texts. Rāmānuja's explanation of the *nirguṇa*-texts cannot, therefore, be accepted.

8.4.3. *The meaning of the Taittirīya text*, II, *ix*, 1

According to Rāmānuja, the *Taittirīya* text, II, ix, 1, which says that Brahman is that "Whence all speech, together with the mind, turns away, unable to reach it" proclaims with emphasis the infinite nature of the auspicious qualities of Brahman (*brahmaṇaḥ kalyāṇa-guṇa-ānantyam atyādāreṇa vadati iyam śrutiḥ*).[39] The unlimited qualities of the infinite Brahman cannot be defined either by the mind or speech to be such-and-such. That is why the *Upaniṣad* declares, says Rāmānuja, "Whence speech together with the mind turns away being unable to reach it."

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39. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 92.

Here also Rāmānuja's interpretation is not convincing. Does this text speak about Brahman or the qualities of Brahman? Rāmānuja thinks that it speaks about the qualities of Brahman. The word "*yataḥ*" which means *yasmāt* (that from which), which occurs in the text, refers to Brahman and not to the qualities of Brahman.[40] Therefore the meaning of the text is that speech as well as the mind turns away from Brahman without reaching it. Secondly, if Brahman is *saguṇa*, it can be expressed through words and comprehended by the mind. What is *nirguṇa* alone will be outside the scope of both speech and mind. Since the *Upaniṣad* says that speech as well as the mind turns away without reaching Brahman, it shows that Brahman is *nirguṇa*. It is no argument to say that the qualities of Brahman which are infinite cannot be measured or counted by the mind and expressed by speech and so both speech and mind turn away from the infinite qualities of Brahman. In the text there is the word "aprāpya" (without reaching) whose significance should be taken into consideration. Only if both speech and mind could reach Brahman, the question of their trying to count the qualities of Brahman will arise. If that were the case, one might argue that since the qualities were past counting, both mind and speech returned after their unsuccessful mission. But the *Upaniṣad* uses the word "*aprāpya*". It means that speech and mind do not reach Brahman at all.[41] Advaita holds the view that both speech and mind fail to reach Brahman, because it is *nirguṇa* and for no other reason. Brahman can, therefore, be described only negatively as what it is not, and not positively as what it is.

8.4.4. *The meaning of the Chāndogya text,* VIII, i, 5

We shall now consider the *Chāndogya* text, VIII, i, 5 which says, "That is the Self, free from sin, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger and thirst, whose desires are true, whose purposes are true." According to Rāmānuja, this text is significant for two reasons. While the first part of the text denies of Brahman all evil qualities, the second part affirms of Brahman auspicious

40. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 159.

41. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 159.

qualities.[42] Brahman, thus, is both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* — *nirguṇa* in the sense that it is without evil qualities and *saguṇa* in the sense that it is in possession of all auspicious qualities. The text provides the clue as to how we can reconcile the *nirguṇa* and the *saguṇa* texts. This is how Rāmānuja interprets the *Chāndogya* text mentioned above.

Here also Rāmānuja's interpretation is not satisfactory. For one thing, it is wrong to say that sin, old age, death, etc., are qualities.[43] Consequently Rāmānuja's view that the first part of the *Chāndogya* text under consideration explains the absence of *heya-guṇas* in Brahman cannot be accepted. Further, the second part of the text does not directly speak of the *guṇas* of Brahman. If that were the case, one might argue that this text is the evidence for Brahman being *saguṇa*. There is yet another objection which is more fundamental. Desire (*kāma*) and resolve (*saṅkalpa*) which are mentioned in the text are not the qualities of the Self; they are forms or states of the mind or the internal organ. Consider in this connection the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* text, I, V, 3 which says: "Desire, resolve, doubt, faith, want of faith, steadiness, unsteadiness, shame, intelligence and fear — all these are but the mind." The *Upaniṣad* here, after proving the existence of the mind, describes its nature. When it lists the various characteristics of the mind, it speaks of *kāma* and *saṅkalpa*. So it is wrong to say that the second part of the *Chāndogya* text mentioned above predicates qualities of Brahman-Ātman.[44]

8.4.5. *Examination of Brahman-qualities relation*

Without reference to any particular Scriptural text let us examine briefly the relation between Brahman and its alleged qualities. There are two ways in which we can view the relation here. The *guṇas*, it may be said, are different from Brahman. If they are different from Brahman, are they pervaded by Brahman or not? If the answer is in the affirmative, then Brahman must be *nirguṇa*, for what pervades *guṇa* cannot be *guṇa*; *i.e.* it must be *nirguṇa*. *Ākāśa* which pervades a *ghaṭa* is *nirghaṭa*; Brahman which pervades *śarīra* is

42. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 91.

43. Vāsudevaśāstri, *ibid.*, p. 124: "*pātaka-jarāmaraṇādīnāṃ guṇatvasya kvāpi-aprasiddhatvāt.*"

44. *Ibid*, p. 124.

aśarīra; in the same way, Brahman which pervades *guṇa* must be *nirguṇa* (*guṇavyāpi brahma nirguṇameva*).[45] If it be said that the qualities which are different from Brahman are not pervaded by Brahman, then we have to say that Brahman is not all-pervasive — a position which is untenable.[46]

Instead of holding the view that *guṇas* are different from Brahman, one may maintain that they are identical with Brahman. We know that there cannot be a quality of a quality: that is, *guṇa* is *nirguṇa*. Since *guṇas* are *nirguṇa*, Brahman which is said to be non-different from the *guṇas* must be admitted to be *nirguṇa*.

We can bring out the difficulty involved in the *guṇa-guṇi* relation in another way. Smell which is the quality of earth pervades it completely. If Brahman, like earth, has qualities, then it must be completely pervaded by them. It means that, while a quality is what pervades, Brahman is what is pervaded; and this is a position which cannot be accepted as it goes against the Scriptural teaching that Brahman is all-pervasive.[47] So the view that Brahman by its very nature is *saguṇa* cannot stand examination.

9. THE OBJECT OF SAVIKALPAKA-PRATYAKṢA IS PURE BEING ONLY

9.1. *Rāmānuja's standpoint*

I propose to go back to the problem of perception for the purpose of examining Rāmānuja's stand that perception proves the existence of difference. The issue which we are going to consider is not about *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, but about *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. In the course of the criticism of the Advaita view that perception gives us the knowledge of pure being or existence (*sanmātram*) and that it is not the evidence for the existence of difference, Rāmānuja says that the generic and other features with which the object is apprehended in perception distinguish the object in which they inhere from other

45. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 159: "*guṇavyāpi brahma nirguṇameva — yathā ghaṭavyāpi gaganam nirghaṭam, yathāvā śarīravyāpi brahma aśarīram.*"

46. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

objects. We may summarise Rāmānuja's standpoint as follows. (1) We do not apprehend pure being or existence in perception ; rather we apprehend a complex object as qualified by generic and other features. (2) We apprehend in one and the same act of perception the specific character of the object as well as its difference from othe objects. (3) Perception, therefore, is the *pramāṇa* for difference (*bheda*). (4) We have to face theoretical absurdities and practical difficulties if we accept the Advaita view that pure being or existence is apprehended in perception. Since the Advaita position which Rāmānuja criticises here is an important one and since he has in view, while formulating his objections, Maṇḍana's elaborate treatment of perception and his dialectics on difference contained in the *tarka-kāṇḍa* of the *Brahmasiddhi*, it is necessary to go into the details not only to have a clear view of the issues involved, but also to do justice to the Advaitin and his thoroughgoing critic.

9.2. *Elucidation of the Advaita argument*

9.2.1. *Step I*

Let us go through the argument of the Advaitin step by step. Every object, whatever it may be, is cognized as existent and not as non-existent. The first step in the Advaita argument is the thesis that *sat* or the existent alone is cognized, but not the non-existent in every case of perception.[48] If the cognition of the non-existent is admitted, then one can as well maintain that the sky-flower which is non-existent is the object of cognition, which is absurd. It may appear that the case of shell-silver as well as that of *abhāva* disproves the thesis of the Advaitin; but it is not so. The shell-silver which is apprehended is not non-existent. On the contrary, it is existent at the time of perception. According to Advaita, anything that is perceived must be admitted to be existent, whatever may be the duration of its existence. The Advaitin reverses the Berkeleyan dictum. Instead of saying that what exists must be perceived, he

48. It was pointed out earlier (§ 5) that the Advaitin is in agreement with the Naiyāyikas and others in holding the view that the object of *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is *saviśeṣa*, *i. e.* a differentiated entity. It is now argued that, in every case of perception including *savikalpaka*, *sat* or being alone is the object of veridical perception; and the distinguishing features such as name and form which are perceived are erroneous.

holds that what is perceived must exist. It is on this ground that he accords "reality" to objects such as a dream-lion and a rope-snake which are termed *prātibhāsika* and to the objects of our day-to-day experience called *vyāvahārika*. Therefore the thesis of the Advaitin that the existent alone is cognized holds good. It cannot be maintained that, since there is apprehension of *abhāva* which is non-existence, the thesis of the Advaitin is untenable. Only if *abhāva* is admitted as a separate category, it will be a problem to the Advaitin. What is existent, *e.g.* pot-sherds, is spoken of in the particular context as the non-existence of a pot due to destruction (*ghaṭa-pradhvaṁsā bhāva*). The Advaitin does not admit the existence of the so-called negative entities. A negative entity, in the words of Sureśvara, is *nirātmaka*; that is, it has no existence. It is only in imagination (*kalpanāmātra*) like a stone-son.[49] And we speak of it as though it is existent when we transact our business of life. Further, mere *abhāva* can never be cognized at all. When we say, for example, that a pot is non-existent, what we mean is that the pot which is the *pratiyogin* is not cognized; this, however, does not mean that there is the cognition of the non-existence of a pot. Or, we may treat it, as the Prābhākara would say, as a case of the cognition of the locus (*adhikaraṇa*) where the pot is absent.

9.2.2. *Step II*

As a second step in the argument, the Advaitin says that *sat* or the existent which is cognized in perception is Brahman. The real (*satya*) is the existent (*sat*), and the existent alone is the real. The Advaitin equates *sat* and *satya*. The *Chāndogya* text, VI, ii, 1, "Being or existence alone, my dear, was in the beginning," and the *Taittirīya* text, II, i, 1, "Real, knowledge and infinite is Brahman," are the relevant Scriptural authority in this regard. It cannot be said that the pluralistic universe is real (*satya*) and that it is, therefore, existent. Speaking of Brahman or Being, the *Upaniṣad* says, "That is real,"[50] and "Anything other than that is unreal"[51] and so the world is not real.

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49. See R. Balasubramanian, *The Taittirīyopaniṣad-bhāṣya-vārtika of Sureśv*, University of Madras, 1974, Part II, verse 32, p. 15.

50. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI, viii, 7: "*tat satyam*".

51. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III, iv, 2: "*tato anyat ārtam*".

9.2.3. *Step III*

We now come to the third step in the argument. If the existent alone is cognized in perception and if the existent is Brahman, then how is it, it may be asked, that the world is cognized as existent? The answer is that the existence ascribed to the world is due to a false identification (*tādātmyādhyāsa*) of the world with Brahman. Just as we speak of the "clay-pot" (*mṛdghaṭaḥ*), even so we speak of the "existent world" (*sajjagat*). In both the cases we have cause-effect relation; and in both, the effect is identified with the cause. There is, however, this difference: since the cause-effect relation between clay and pot arises through *pariṇāma*, *i.e.* modification of the cause into the effect, both of them have identical nature (*sālakṣaṇya*); but since Brahman is the transfigurative cause (*vivarta-upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world, there is difference in nature (*vailakṣaṇya*) between Brahman and the world. The world appears to be existent because of Brahman, the substratum, on which it is superimposed. In other words, what belongs to Brahman is falsely transferred to the world due to *avidyā*. Whereas an ignorant man affirms the reality of the world because the world alone is existent to him, one who has realized the truth declares the reality of Brahman and cognizes everything as Brahman.

9.2.4. *Step IV*

The fourth step in the argument consists in showing that what holds good in the case of the world as a whole is also true of every individual object cognized by us. When we say on the basis of perception that a pot is existent, a tree is existent, and so on, what is existent is Brahman alone; and it is the existence of Brahman that is apprehended in every act of perception.

It is necessary to clarify a doubt that may arise. When we perceive a pot, we are able to apprehend the clayness therein and speak of it as a clay-pot, identifying the pot with clay. If the existent is Brahman and if the existence of Brahman is what is apprehended in every act of perception as claimed by the Advaitin, why is it, it may be asked, that when we perceive a pot we do not apprehend the presence of Brahman in the pot? Just as we have the cognition, "clay-pot" (*mṛdghaṭaḥ*), why is it that we do not have the cognition,

"Brahman-pot" (*brahma-ghaṭaḥ*)? Why is it that we do not get the cognition, "Brahman-world" (*brahma-jagat*)?

There are two points to be emphasized while clarifying the above doubt. While the Advaitin employs the clay-pot analogy for the purpose of enlightening the epistemological and metaphysical issues involved in Brahman-world relation, he knows that analogy holds good only in certain essential respects without ruling out difference in some other respects. We have already said that the cause-effect relation between clay and pot can be explained through *pariṇāma*, whereas the cause-effect relation between Brahman and the world has to be explained in terms of *vivarta*. So while in the one case we get the cognition "clay-pot", we do not in the other case get the cognition, "Brahman-world" or "Brahman-pot". Secondly, though the existent is Brahman and Brahman is the existent, nevertheless we may speak of the two aspects of Brahman—the existent-aspect called *sattva-rūpa* and the Brahman-aspect called *brahma-rūpa*. While the existent-aspect, because of its generality, is invariably apprehended in every object which is cognized in perception, the Brahman-aspect, which is specific and not general as the other one, is not apprehended that way. The rope-snake example provides the clue. The object in front, let us say, is a rope. Our perceptual cognition, when veridical, is expressed through the judgment, "This is a rope." Here is a case where we identify the "this", which refers to the object in front, with the rope. Though we identify the "this" with the rope (and the rope with the "this"), nevertheless we draw a distinction between these two aspects. We say that the given object has two aspects — a general and a specific (*sāmānya-rūpa* and *viśeṣa-rūpa*). The "this" stands for the general aspect of the object, while "ropeness" is its specific aspect. Even when it is erroneously perceived as a snake, it is perceived along with its general aspect, *viz* the "this" aspect, as is evident from the judgment "This is a snake". When the erroneous cognition is followed by the sublating cognition, the sublation is only in respect of the predicate (snake) and not with regard to the subject (this) of the judgment. No one perceives the given object as rope-snake (as *rajju-sarpa*); but a person who perceives it erroneously gives expression to his cognition through the judgment, "This is a snake". In the same way, the existent-aspect which being *sāmānya* is invaribly present everywhere is apprehended in every act of perception, but

not the Brahman-aspect. That is why we perceive a pot as existent, a mountain as existent, and so on; but we do not perceive a pot as Brahman, a tree as Brahman, a mountain as Brahman. So the Advaitin concludes that in every case of perception we apprehend existence or being.

9.2.5. *Step V*

There is one more step to complete the argument of the Advaitin. It may be conceded, one may argue, that when we perceive a pot, we apprehend existence along with the pot. How is it, then, that the Advaitin says that perception apprehends pure existence or being (*sanmātram*) alone? Once again the rope-snake example suggests the answer. When a person perceives a rope as a snake and says, "This is a snake," the "this" is the object of his veridical perception, while "snake" which comes into existence at that time, in that place, to that person, due to the work of *avidyā* is the object of erroneous perception. While the "this" which is cognized through *pramāṇa-vṛtti* does not suffer sublation, "snake" which is apprehended through *avidyā-vṛtti* suffers sublation. In the same way, when there is the perceptual knowledge of a pot as "the existent pot" (*sanghaṭaḥ*), "existence" is the object of perception which is veridical, whereas "pot" is the object of erroneous perception due to *avidyā*. So Advaita holds the view that pure existence (*sanmātram*) is the object of *savikal-paka-pratyakṣa*.

Through the visual sense we see colour and the object which possesses colour. Since the visual sense is accepted to be a *pramāṇa*, how can the Advaitin say, it may be asked, that colour, the object which possesses colour, etc., apprehended through perception are erroneous? This argument which pleads for the acceptance of the evidence of *pramāṇa* does not weaken, but only strengthens the standpoint of the Advaitin. What is known through a *pramāṇa* must be real (*yathārtha*). Everything other than Brahman, the *Upaniṣad* tells us, is unreal (*ayathārtha*). Colour and other qualities as well as the objects which possess them are unreal inasmuch as they are different from Brahman. If so, how can it be said that colour and other qualities and the things in which they inhere which are *ayathārtha* are the objects apprehended by *pramāṇas* such as the visual sense? On the contrary, it is but proper to say that through

visual sense we apprehend pure existence or being only which is Brahman, which is real and which is not subject to sublation.[52]

9.3. *Does perception reveal difference ?*

Let us examine Rāmānuja's claim that we perceive difference (*bheda*) and that difference which, being an object of perception, is real cannot be characterized as *durnirūpa.*[53] What is proved by *pramāṇa*, according to Rāmānuja and his commentator Sudarśana, should not be said to be *durnirūpa.* Rāmānuja seeks to justify his claim on the ground that we apprehend in one and the same act of perception the specific character of the object as well as its difference from other objects. Here is a position which is in direct confrontation with that of Maṇḍana according to whom perception does not differentiate one object from others, but only reveals an object. The oft-quoted line from Maṇḍana in support of which there is the entire dialectics contained in the *Tarkakāṇḍa* of his *Brahmasiddhi* is: "*āhurvidhātṛ pratyakṣam na niṣedhṛ vipaścitaḥ.*"[54] Rāmānuja, no doubt, feels dissatisfied with Maṇḍana's arguments. But the real question is whether he has answered Maṇḍana. Unless one ventures to say that Maṇḍana's arguments are vitiated by a foundational mistake, I do not think that his arguments can be disposed of as Rāmānuja endeavours to do, in a few lines. I shall first present Maṇḍana's arguments in support of the view that perception simply reveals an object and that it does not distinguish one object from others.

What does perception do as a *pramāṇa* ? Five different answers may be given to this question. They are : (1) perception reveals an object; (2) it distinguishes one object from others; (3) it reveals an object and distinguishes it from others simultaneously; (4) it first distinguishes one object from others, and then reveals the nature of the object; and (5) it first reveals an object and then distinguishes it

52. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 44: "*cakṣurādīni prāmāṇāni iti matam, tarhi tadviṣayasya yathārthatvenaiva bhavitavyam, brahmabhinnam tu na yathārthamiti. katham rūpādeḥ ayathārthārthasya cakṣurādipramāṇagrāhyatvam? kiṁtu cakṣurādīni rūpādyadhiṣṭhāna-caitanya-grāhīṇyeva pramāṇatvāt...*"

53. *Śrī-bhāya* (Uttamur edition), p. 53.

54. Maṇḍanamiśra, *Brahmasiddhi*, ed. S. Kuppuswami Sastri, Government Oriental Manuscripts Series, No. 4, 1937, Part I, p. 39.

from others.[55] Only if it can be shown that perception reveals difference between one object and another, or that it both reveals an object and distinguishes it from others simultaneously or one after another, one can hold the view that difference is known through perception. Of the five alternatives mentioned above Maṇḍana argues that excepting the first one all the other alternatives are untenable.

We shall first consider the second alternative. Is it possible for perception to distinguish one object from another? Difference presupposes two things. In order to show the difference between two things, *e.g.* a cow and a horse, perception must first of all reveal their existence. We establish difference between cow and horse by negating the horse from the cow. It means that the notion of difference involves negation as seen in the judgment, "A cow is not a horse." When we negate a horse from a cow, "horse" is *pratiyogin* or counter-correlate and "cow" is *anuyogin* or correlate. Maṇḍana argues that perception should first of all reveal or affirm the existence of both *pratiyogin* and *anuyogin* before negation involved in the notion of difference takes place. Negation without prior affirmation is not possible. Two things, *e.g.* cow and horse, must first of all be known before the one is negated from the other. That is why Maṇḍana says: *vidhipūrvaka eva niṣedaḥ.*[56] Perception is such that it can only reveal an object, a cow or a horse as the case may be; and its function comes to an end the moment it shows the object. It is not its role to do the work of distinguishing one object from another.

In the light of what has been said above, we have to reject the third and fourth alternatives; that is, we cannot admit that perception reveals an object and distinguishes it from others simultaneously; nor can we accept that perception first distinguishes one object from others and then reveals the nature of the object.

Only one alternative remains to be examined, and that is the last. Is it possible to say that perception first reveals an object and then distinguishes it from others? Maṇḍana adduces two arguments to show why we have to reject even this alternative. First of all, the

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55. Maṇḍanamiśra, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 44.

56. *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 45.

nature of perception is such that it cannot discharge two functions, *viz* showing an object as well as distinguishing it from another. Perception is one unique process of cognition. There are not two moments in it such that it could first reveal an object and then distinguish it from others.[57] The moment it shows an object, its work comes to an end. The differentiation which follows is not the work of perception. Secondly, perception reveals an object which is in sense contact. It has nothing to do with an object which is not in sense contact. After revealing an object which is in sense contact, say a cow, it cannot at that moment distinguish it from another object, say a horse, with which it is not in sense contact. Perception can only reveal an object. To expect anything more from it is to ignore its nature and the built-in limitation it is subject to.

While Advaita holds that *bheda* which involves duality is illusory, Rāmānuja maintains that *bheda* which is known through *pratyakṣa* is real. How is *bheda*, we ask, the object of *pratyakṣa*? Each of the five sense organs has its own object. We get the knowledge of touch, colour, sound, smell and taste through the five senses which are the instruments of perceptual knowledge. Since *bheda* is not any one of these five objects, it cannot be the object of sense perception (*aindriyaka-pratyakṣa*). Nor can it be the object of mental perception (*mānasika-pratyakṣa*). Pleasure and pain which are subjective or internal are known through the mind. Since *bheda* is not subjective or internal, it cannot be known through the mind. It means that *bheda* is neither the object of sense perception nor that of mental perception. How, then, can Rāmānuja maintain that *bheda* is apprehended through perception?[58] Leave alone perception. Could it not be said that it is known through inference? The answer is no. Consider the following argument which one may suggest for the purpose of proving that a pot is different from a piece of cloth:

Pot is different from cloth.

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57. *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 45: "*na khalu ekapramāṇajñāna-vyāpārau santau vidhivyavacchedau kramavantau yujyate, kṣaṇikatvāt...*"

Rāmānuja's argument contained in the sentence beginning with "*ekakṣaṇavartitvepi pratyakṣajñānasya tasminneva kṣaṇe...*" (p. 53 in *Śrī-bhāṣya*) is with reference to Maṇḍana.

58. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 43.

Because it has a different name and shape.

Objects which have different names and shapes are different from each other, *e.g.* a mat.

One will notice that in this argument the difference between pot and cloth is sought to be proved by means of difference in name and shape. The question to be answered is: How is this difference in name and form known? It is no argument to say that this difference is known through another *anumāna*. Any such attempt will be vitiated by the fallacy of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśraya*). Only if the difference between pot and cloth is proved, one can speak of the difference in name and form between pot and cloth; and only if the difference in name and form between pot and cloth is known, one can establish the difference between pot and cloth. *Upamāna* also is of no use in this regard. We get the knowledge of similarity (*sādṛśya*) and not of *bheda* through *upamāna*. *Śruti*, too, has to be ruled out, because it purports to teach non-duality.[59]

Is it possible to make out a case for *bheda* on the basis of our day-to-day life? It is true that in our day-to-day life we say, "This is a pot, "This is a pan", and so on; and so one may argue that unless we accept the difference between one object and another we cannot carry on our business of life. This is no argument at all for establishing the reality of *bheda*. For one thing, the Advaitin does not deny that we transact our business of life on the basis of difference, *i.e.* assuming difference between one thing and another. It must be pointed out here that an assumption, however useful it may be in our practical affairs, need not be valid. Our entire business of life—at the epistemological, ethical, and practical levels — is based on *adhyāsa*; and this is the central idea that is sought to be conveyed by Śaṅkara in the celebrated *adhyāsabhāṣya*. *Bheda*, no doubt, is assumed by us; it is also experienced by us. Though it is experienced, it is not validly established; that is, it is only *prasiddha* and not *pramāṇa-siddha*. Secondly, there is a logical difficulty when one cites our day-to-day life or *vyavahāra* as the evidence for *bheda*. It is the assumption of difference, *e.g.* the difference between pot and cloth, that makes possible our *vyavahāra*, and we can also argue the other

59. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

way. It is *vyavahāra* that makes possible the distinction between one object and another. And so there arises the logical problem of *anyonyāśraya.*[60]

9.4. *Rāmānuja's view : Saṁsthāna=Jāti=Bheda*

Rāmānuja cannot be accused of any ambiguity in the statement of the argument given by him in support of the view that difference is apprehended through perception. His argument is simple without being naive. However, it does not carry conviction. According to him, *saṁsthāna* which is the distinctive form of an object is *jāti* or generic quality of that object. And *jāti* is *bheda.* No one can perceive an object without its distinctive form. So to perceive an object is to perceive its distinctive form; to perceive its distinctive form is to perceive its *jāti*; and to perceive its *jāti* is to perceive its difference. Here is an argument in which *saṁsthāna* is equated with *jāti,* and *jāti* with *bheda*; and this argument, Rāmānuja thinks, serves the purpose.[61]

We must be clear about the meanings of the terms used by Rāmānuja before we examine the soundness of his argument. The word "*saṁsthāna*" means a distinctive form or shape or configuration (*asādhāraṇarūpa*) of an object. Rāmānuja himself explains the term and illustrates it. He says: "By '*saṁsthāna*' is meant the special or distinctive form of an object, and we find each class of objects having its distinctive form" (*saṁsthānam nāma sva asādhāraṇam rūpamiti yathā-vastu saṁsthānam anusandheyam*).[62] For example, the triangularly shaped dew-lap called "*sāsnā*" is the distinctive form of cows. *Jāti* is the generic quality present in the individuals belonging to a particular class; for example, "cowness". Rāmānuja argues that *jāti* is not something different from the *saṁsthāna* of an object; but *jāti* is the *saṁsthāna* itself, for we do not perceive anything other than the *saṁsthāna* as the common element present in the several members of a class. So Rāmānuja declares that *saṁsthāna* alone is *jāti* (*saṁsthāna-meva jātiḥ*).[63] After giving this equation of *saṁsthāna* and *jāti*, Rāmā-

60. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

61. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), pp. 54-55.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

nuja goes on to the other equation of *jāti* and *bheda*. His argument is that since we are to distinguish one object from another, *e.g.* a cow from a horse, only by apprehending the *jāti* of the object, the *jāti* itself is *bheda*. So Rāmānuja concludes that in perception we apprehend an object associated with *bheda* which is of the nature of *jāti*, which again is only *saṁsthāna*. To quote Rāmānuja: *vastusaṁsthānarūpa jātyādilakṣaṇabheda-viśiṣṭaviṣayameva pratyakṣam.*[64]

9.5. *Refutation of the above view*

9.5.1. *Saṁsthāna is different from jāti*

Rāmānuja's view that *saṁsthāna* or the distinctive form of an object is *jāti* cannot be accepted. There are several reasons to show that *saṁsthāna* and *jāti* are not the same. While one and the same generic feature is present in all the members of a class, one and the same *saṁsthāna* is not present in all the individuals of a class. "Cowness" which is one is the common feature present in all the individual cows. There is no plurality or manyness with regard to "cowness". We do not say that the "cowness" inherent in an individual cow is different from the "cowness" inherent in another cow. But the same thing cannot be said of *saṁsthāna*. It is absurd to say, for example, that one and the same dewlap, which is the *saṁsthāna* or the distinctive form of cow, is present in all cows. Perception disproves any such claim. It is a matter of common experience that the dewlap of the cow in my house is not the same as the dewlap of the cow in my neighbour's house. The two are similar, but not identical. Consider another example. A ten-paise coin has a distinctive form or shape of its own. All ten-paise coins produced by the government bear resemblance to one another in respect of their shape or form. The shape of one coin is similar to, but not identical with, the shape of another coin. After all, *saṁsthāna* is the distinctive form or feature of an object by which we are able to identify it. There is no compulsion that we must take only the dewlap as the *saṁsthāna* of cow. A broken horn or some other aspect which is distinctive of an object may as well be taken as *saṁsthāna*. A particular broken-horn-shape which we notice in one cow and which helps us to distinguish it from others is not to be seen

64. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

in another cow. So *saṁsthāna* is different from *jāti*. It may be that a particular *saṁsthāna* is indicative of the *jāti* of an object; but it can never be identified with the latter.[65]

9.5.2. *Jāti is different from bheda*

Rāmānuja's equation of *jāti* with *bheda* is equally untenable. If *jāti* is the same as *bheda*, then the two terms, we have to say, convey the same meaning; and we should be able to use one term in the place of the other in our discourse. But we cannot. In fact, we will not be able to construe the meaning at all from a sentence if we do so. For example, we say, "There is *paṭa-bheda* (*i.e.* the difference of cloth) in a pot." If we replace the word "*bheda*" by the word "*jāti*", the sentence will read, "There is *paṭa-jāti* (*i.e.* the generic quality of cloth) in a pot." But the sentence is not meaningful at all as a result of the substitution. When someone says that a pot is *different from* cloth, we do not get the verbal cognition that a pot has the *generic quality of* cloth. So it is wrong to say that *jāti* itself is *bheda*.

The real position is this. Both *saṁsthāna* and *jāti* are indicators of difference.[66] While the former brings out the difference between one object and another of the same class, the latter shows the difference between two objects belonging to different classes.

Further, while the knowledge of *bheda* presupposes the knowledge of *pratiyogin*, neither *saṁsthāna* nor *jāti* to be known requires *pratiyogin*. If someone says, "The pot is different," the meaning intended to be conveyed by his utterance remains incomplete for want of the *pratiyogin*. We would ask him to tell us the *object* from which the pot is different; and that object, *e.g.* cloth, is the *pratiyogin*. But when we speak about, and convey the knowledge of, both *saṁsthāna* and *jāti*, the question of *pratiyogin* does not arise.[67]

There is yet another point to be considered here. While both *saṁsthāna* and *jāti* admit of explanation in definite terms, *bheda* does

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65. Vāsudevaśāstri, *ibid*., p. 75: "*saṁsthānasya jātivyañjakatvāt*."

66. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid*., p. 46: "*tasmāt saṁsthānam vā jātirvā bhedaprayojakameva, na tu bhedaḥ*."

67. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid* , p. 46: "*evam bhedasya saṁsthānatvajātitva abhāvādeva pratiyogi-sāpekṣatvam*."

not admit of any such explanation. That is why the latter is said to be *durnirūpa*, like *abhāva*. The case of *abhāva* is simple. It cannot be treated as existent. It is a contradiction in terms to say that *abhāva* which means non-existent is existent. Nor can it be said to be non-existent. To say that the non-existent is non-existent is to deny the very category of *abhāva*. It is this idea that is conveyed in the oft-quoted line of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, II, 16, "*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*." Since there is difficulty either way, *abhāva* is said to be *durnirūpa*. *Bheda* also, like *abhāva*, is *durnirūpa*. Since it cannot be proved by means of a *pramāṇa*, we cannot say that it is existent. Since it is experienced by us in our day-to-day life, we cannot dismis it as non-existent. Considering that it cannot be characterized as either existent or non-existent, we have to say that it is *durnirūpa* or *anirvacanīya*. If *avidyā* which is the cause of the entire empirical realm is *anirvacanīya*, *i.e.* indescribable as *sat* or *asat*, *bheda* which is in the empirical order cannot be anything but *anirvacanīya*. It cannot be said that *bheda* is real on the ground that the *akhaṇḍākāravṛttijñāna* which removes it is *mithyā*. *Bheda*, the *pramāṇa* which sublates *bheda*, the knowledge which arises from the *pramāṇa*—all these the Advaitin holds to be *mithyā*, because they are different from Brahman.[68]

Rāmānuja holds up the Advaitin to ridicule by pointing out the absurdities that will arise if the Advaita view that we do not perceive difference is accepted. It is enough if we consider just one case as a specimen of Rāmānuja's argument. If we do not perceive difference, one who needs a horse, Rāmānuja suggests, may as well be satisfied with a buffalo. If, fortunately for us, such an absurdity does not take place, it is only because of the fact that we do perceive difference.[69] Rāmānuja attempts this type of *reductio ad absurdum* to bring out the untenability of the Advaita view. But this argument is not effective because the Advaitin admits difference among things at the empirical level. While he affirms the reality of non-duality, he does not deny empirical difference. As long as our day-to-day experience goes, even to the Advaitin a horse is different from a buffalo. This empirical difference which is *prasiddha*, he does not deny; but it is not *pramāṇa-siddha*, according to him. Our claim to see the plurality of

68. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

69. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), pp. 53-54.

objects such as pot and pan is no more valid than the claim of a person about the reality of the rope-snake on the basis of his perception.

9.5.3. *Abheda is not durnirūpa*

It is necessary in this context to consider an objection that is levelled against the Advaita view according to which *abheda* or non-difference is the truth taught by Scripture with the support of reasoning. *Abheda*, the critic argues, is *durnirūpa*. If the Advaitin could say that *bheda* is *durnirūpa*, why should it not be said that *abheda* is *durnirūpa*? The method of reasoning adopted by the critic is as follows. He asks: Is *abheda* the essential nature of Brahman? Or is it an attribute of Brahman? Whatever be the alternative chosen by the Advaitin, there is difficulty. *Abheda* is non-difference or absence of difference. The term "*abheda*", the critic argues, cannot be explained without reference to a *pratiyogin*, because like "*bheda*" it is a relative term. We do not say that "pot-ether is not different." But we do say that "pot-ether is non-different from the all-pervasive ether". If the Advaitin would hold the view that *abheda* is the essential nature of Brahman, he would be using the term, the critic argues, without reference to a *pratiyogin* which is untenable. The second alternative fares no better. If *abheda* is viewed as an attribute of Brahman, then Brahman is *saviśeṣa*, a position which is not acceptable to the Advaitin. So the critic concludes that *abheda* which is considered to be the ultimate truth by the Advaitin is *durnirūpa*.

The critic who wants to pay the Advaitin in his own coin does not succeed in his attempt. It has to be borne in mind that the Advaitin is not so much concerned about proving the truth of *abheda* as he is about disproving the reality of *bheda*. The oft-quoted statement of Vācaspati, "*na abhedam bhrūmaḥ hiṁtu bhedam vyāsedhāmaḥ*," is relevant in this context. Should the Advaitin try to establish the truth of *abheda* directly, then he should be questioned as to whether he would treat *abheda* as the *svarūpa* or as a *viśeṣaṇa* of Brahman. But the Advaitin does not do this. His approach is different. Consider, for instance, the way in which *śruti* provides the clue to the problem. It says: "There is no plurality whatsoever here."[70] This text, it is obvious, purports to deny plurality.

70. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV, vi, 19.

Śaṅkara observes that Scripture does not teach that Brahman is such-and-such. Scripture itself says that Brahman does not fall within the scope of both speech and mind as is evident from the *Taittirīya* text, "That from which speech returns along with the mind being unable to reach it."[71] After making such a declaration, *śruti* certainly will not attempt to do what is impossible. That is why Śaṅkara says that *śruti* does not set forth the nature of Brahman in positive terms as such-and-such (*na hi śāstram idantayā brahma avabodhayati*). Then what does *śruti* do? Śaṅkara's answer is that *śruti* purports to deny *bheda* or difference caused by *avidyā* (*avidyākalpita-bheda-nivṛttiparatvāt śāstrasya*).[72] What is to be achieved is the removal of *bheda* which is not real. When the false distinctions which cover the truth are removed, than the truth shines of its own accord, in the same way as when the dirt which has settled on a piece of cloth is removed, the latter shines in its true colour of its own accord. Attaining Truth or Brahman is, indeed, dis-covering Truth or Brahman. Since the problem is not one of "attaining" the Truth, but one of un-covering the false, the Advaitin avoids the use of the word "attainment" with regard to Brahman-Ātman. It is in this context that we have to understand the full significance of Vācaspati's remark that the Advaitin does not prove *abheda*, but denies *bheda*.

Is it possible to say that *abheda* is an attribute of Brahman? Does the Advaitin admit the presence of a negative entity along with Brahman? These two questions which are important deserve consideration here. *Abheda* is absence of *bheda*; that is, it is *bhedābhāva* and so it is something negative. Since the Advaitin says that Brahman is devoid of *bheda*, *i.e.* there is the absence of *bheda* in Brahman, *bhedābhāva*, the critic says, may be viewed as a negative characteristic (*abhāvarūpadharma*) of Brahman; and this would make Brahman *saviśeṣa*. This argument is wrong. *Abheda* in the sense of *bhedābhāva* is, no doubt, negative. *Abhāva* which is negative can neither be a substantive nor an attribute for the simple reason that it is *abhāva* (*i.e.*

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71. II, ix, 1.

72. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brakma-sūtra*, I, i, 4.

non-existent) like the sky-flower.[73] *Abhāva* has no existence. It is no entity at all. It is, as already stated, purely imaginary (*kalpanā-mātram*). Only what is positive or existent can be a substantive as well as an attribute. But *abhāva* can be neither. So the question of considering *abheda* as a negative attribute of Brahman has to be ruled out.

9.5.4 *The problem of bhāvādvaita*

In the light of what has been stated above regarding *abhāva*, we can answer the question whether the Advaitin can admit any negative entity besides Brahman without prejudice to the standpoint of Advaita. It is argued that Advaita excludes only a second positive entity (*bhāvapadārtha*) and that the admission of a negative entity besides Brahman is not inconsistent with non-dualism. Kuppuswami Sastri is of the view that Maṇḍana advocated such a kind of Advaita which is called *bhāvādvaita*.[74] In support of his view he cites Maṇḍana's statement, "*prapañcasya pravilayaḥ śabdena pratipādyate,*" contained in the *Siddhi-kāṇḍa* of the *Brahmasiddhi*.[75] I shall make a brief reference to the context in which this line occurs. To the question, "What is it that is taught by Scripture?" Maṇḍana's answer is "*prapañcābhāva*", *i.e.* the absence of the world. The negative texts such as "*neti neti*",[76] '*asthūlam anaṇu...*'[77] deny the phenomenal world falsely associated with Brahman; and that which survives the negation of the world is Brahman which is real (*bheda upasaṁhāra avaśiṣṭam ca satyam brahma*). So giving up the false notion that Brahman is *saprapañca*, we realize it as *niṣprapañca* through the help of *śruti*. This is what Maṇḍana conveys in the course of the explanation of the line, "*prapañcasya pravilayaḥ śabdena pratipādyate.*" Strangely enough Kuppuswami Sastri reads into Maṇḍana's explanation the doctrine called *bhāvādvaita* and argues that Maṇḍana's standpoint here is in marked contrast to that of

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73. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid*., p. 48: "*nahi abhāvaḥ kasyacid-vastuno viśeṣyam viśeṣa-ṇamvā bhavati, abhāvatvādeva śaśaśṛṅgavaditi.*"

74. See his Introduction to *Brahmasiddhi*, *op. cit*, p. xli.

75. Maṇḍanamiśra, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 157.

76. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II, iii, 6.

77. *Ibid.*, III, viii, 8,

Śaṅkara and Sureśvara. Here I do not propose to go into the controversy of the alleged Maṇḍana-Sureśvara difference on this issue. It seems to me that there is no justification for ascribing *bhāvādvaita* to Maṇḍana. There is no textual evidence in this context or elsewhere in the *Brahmasiddhi* for considering Maṇḍana as an advocate of *bhāvādvaita* holding the view that *prapañcābhāva*, to use the words of Kuppuswami Sastri, "should be taken to be an irreducible negative reality present alongside the absolute Brahman."[78] Kuppuswami Sastri goes to the extent of saying that *bhāvādvaita* is an accommodating type of Advaita, whereas the Advaita of Śaṅkara and Sureśvara is strict and uncompromising.[79] It must be pointed out in this conncetion that it is wrong to think that there are different kinds of Advaita advocated by the Advaitins. In fact, Kuppuswami Sastri admits that Maṇḍana has not used the word "*bhāvādvaita*" anywhere in his *Brahmasiddhi*.[80] The Advaitin, I hold, does not and need not qualify his Advaita by any adjective, because there is only one Advaita. For example, the Advaita of Śaṅkara is very often referred to as *kevalādvaita* by the critics of Advaita. Śaṅkara nowhere refers to his standpoint as *kevalādvaita*. Nor does Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara's predecessor, speak of Advaita as *kevalādvaita*. This is a term that is foisted on the Advaitin by the critics who, in spite of their disagreement with Advaita, would like to hold on to some kind of Advaita and who would therefore speak of their Advaita position with qualification such as "*viśiṣṭādvaita*", "*śakti-viśiṣṭādvaita*", "*śuddhātvaita*" and so on, for the purpose of distinguishing their views from Advaita. Suffice it to say that Advaita, if and when qualified, ceases to be Advaita.

When the Advaitin says on the basis of the *śruti* text, "*ekameva advitīyam*,"[81] that Brahman is free from *sajātīya*, *vijātīya* and *svagatabheda*, he denies the existence of both positive and negative entities other than Brahman. Further, even at the empirical level, there is no need to accept the existence of a negative entity as something different from a positive entity. The so-called non-existence of a pot

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78. See his Introduction to *Brahmasiddhi*, *op. cit.*, p. xliii.

79. *Ibid.*, p. xli.

80. *Ibid.*, p. xli.

81. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI, ii, 1.

due to destruction (*ghaṭa-pradhvaṁsābhāva*) is none other than pot-sherds. One and the same entity, observes Maṇḍana, may be spoken of both positively and negatively (*ekasyāpi vastuno bhāvābhāvarupena vyapedeśāt*). Positively speaking. we call it pot-sherds: and negatively speaking, we call it the non-existence of a pot due to destruction. The difference is only in the manner of speaking.

The same principle, says Maṇḍana, holds good in the case of *vidyā* and *avidyā-nivṛtti*. The rise of knowledge itself is the destruction of *avidyā*. It is wrong to say that *avidyā-nivṛtti* exists as a negative entity along with *avidyā*. Adopting the same line of reasoning we have to say that there is no such thing as *prapañcābhāva* in addition to Brahman. Maṇḍana does not think in terms of the existence of a negative entity, call it *avidyā-nivṛtti* or *prapañcābhāva*, besides the non-dual Brahman. This is evident from his own explanation of his statement, "'*avidyāstamayo mokṣaḥ.*"[82]

We may examine this issue in another way also. The rope-snake example will help us. The object in front which is only a rope is seen as a snake. When a person knows the truth and corrects the mistake, he says, "This is not a snake". The absence of snake in this case is nothing else than the reality of rope. The illusory snake, even as it exists, has no reality of its own other than that of the substratum on which it is superimposed. If so, it is untenable to speak of the non-existence of the snake as a negative reality in addition to rope. The same thing holds good in the case of *bhedābhāva*. *Bheda*, like the rope-snake, is *kalpita*. It is projected due to *avidyā* on the non-dual Brahman which is the substratum. The absence of *bheda* is nothing else than Brahman, the reality.[83]. The Advaitin, therefore, does not admit of negative entities along with Brahman. There are no valid arguments to show that *abheda* is *durnirūpa*.

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82. Maṇḍanamiśra, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 119.

S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri holds the view that Maṇḍana has not advocated *bhāvādvaita*. He characterises *bhāvādvaita* as "the product of philosophic confusion." See his article, "Mandana and Bhāvādvaitin" in *Collected Papers of Professor S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri*, ed. T. M. P. Mahadevan, University of Madras, 1961, pp. 272-280.

83. Rāmarāyakavi, *op. cit*, pp. 48-49: "*bhedasya brahmaṇi ajñānena kalpitatvena kalpitābhāvasya adhiṣṭhāna-anatirekāt bhedābhāvo brahmaiva yathā rajjusarpābhāvo rajjureva.*"

10. FULL-FLEDGED REALISM OF RĀMĀNUJA

10. 1. *Consciousness is two-way relational*

Let us now consider Rāmānuja's analysis of the nature of consciousness on the basis of his epistemological realism. The minimum that is claimed by the realist is that there is such a thing as consciousness or knowledge. On the basis of the minimum claim the realist argues that consciousness refers to some object to which it is related. So far as this minimum claim is concerned, Rāmānuja is like his Western counterpart. However, there is something distinctive in Rāmānuja's position. According to Rāmānuja, consciousness is two-way relational. It is related to an object on the one hand, and to a subject on the other. Consciousness is not only consciousness of some object but also consciousness belonging to someone.[84] Though we speak of consciousness in a general way, it must always be somebody's consciousness. This somebody is the self or the *ātman* to which consciousness is related. In other words, consciousness which is an attribute requires a locus (*āśraya)* for its support. To quote Rāmānuja: "This consciousness (*anubhūti*) which is also termed *jñāna, avagati, samvid,* is a particular attribute belonging to a conscious self and related to an object."[85] According to Rāmānuja, the self which has consciousness as its attribute is itself of the nature of consciousness. He says that the self which is *cid-rūpa* is self-luminous.[86] Here is a case where we have two consciousnesses of which one is the substance (*dharmi*) and the other is its attribute (*dharma*). The two, Rāmānuja says, are distinct, though inseparable. For the purpose of identification, while one is called substantive consciousness (*dharmi-bhūta-jñāna*), the other is called attributive consciousness (*dharmabhuta-jñāna*). Rāmānuja's contention is that it is wrong to say that mere consciousness is the only reality. That there is pure consciousness devoid of locus and objects alike, is a philosophical myth, for we have no knowledge of any such entity, declares Rāmānuja.[87]

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84. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 62 and p. 67. "*na ca nirviṣayā kācit saṁvidasti. anupalabdheḥ ;*" "*samvinnāma kācit nirāśrayā nirviṣayā vā atyantānupalabdheḥ na sambhavati...*"

85. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 70.: "*... ātmā cidrūpa eva caitanya guṇaka iti.*"

87. *Ibid.*, p. 67: "*anubhūti-mātrameva paramārtha iti niṣkarṣakahetvābhāsāśca nirākṛtāḥ.*"

10. 2. *All cognitions are true*

The maximum claim put forward by the realist is that whatever is perceived or thought of exists apart from apprehension and exactly in the form in which it is believed to exist. It means that every cognition is valid and that there is no such thing as error. Rāmānuja is a thorough-going realist subscribing to the maximum claim. A line which is very often quoted from Rāmānuja in this connection is: "*yathārtham sarvavijñānam iti vedavidām matam.*"[88] Those who understand the *Veda*, says Rāmānuja, hold that every cognition is valid.

11. CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT INTENTIONAL BY ITS VERY NATURE

I shall first take up for consideration the theory of the intentionality of consciousness. Rāmānuja argues that, since consciousness is always consciousness of an object, it is intentional. There is, Rāmānuja declares, no such thing as consciousness which is devoid of objects, for we do not come across any such consciousness. It is equally true that anything spoken of as an object (*viṣaya*) is an object to a consciousness. If consciousness is said to be self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*), it can only mean revelation or manifestation of objects by consciousness. What does not reveal objects is not consciousness. So the essential nature of consciousness is such that it has this to-relation inherent in it. So according to Rāmānuja, the essential nature of consciousness consists in its "being instrumental in proving its own object by its own being".[89] Let us examine the present problem in terms of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is a reflective inquiry into consciousness and what it reveals. It describes phenomena as revealed by consciousness. Is there any evidence to say on the basis of a thorough-going application of the phenomenological method that consciousness is always and necessarily consciousness of something? The answer is in the negative. The phenomenological analysis should not be restricted to the study of the nature of consciousness from the standpoint of waking experience alone. We have not only waking experience, but also dream experience and dreamless sleep experience called *suṣupti*.

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88. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 57; "*sva sattayaiva svaviṣaya-sādhanatvam.*"

Instead of confining our attention only to waking and dream experience, we have to pay attention to all the three segments of experience with a view to bringing out the nature of consciousness.

Consciousness in our waking experience is always consciousness of something. In our waking experience, we do not have access to consciousness as such, apart from the object which it reveals and to which it is related. The intended object at this level may be physical like a table or a tree; or it may be a subjective state like pleasure or pain; or it may even be ideas. In short, waking-consciousness is intentional. Being awake means being awake to; and so consciousness must have a transcendent object related to it at the waking level.

Consciousness is also intentional at the level of dream experience. When a person reflects on his dream experience, he finds that he was conscious of various objects at that time. And here also consciousness is not bare consciousness, devoid of objects; it is what is related to objects, whatever they may be. And so consciousness in the dream level is such that it has the to-relation.

As distinguished from waking and dream experience there is the experience of sleep free from dream. When a person wakes up from dreamless sleep and reflects on the nature of experience he had, he says that at that time he was not conscious of anything whatsoever, objective or subjective. Nevertheless there was consciousness at that time, though there were no objects, no phenomena, related to it. If consciousness were also absent at that time, recollection to the effect "I was not conscious of anything then" would be impossible. Had there been objects related to consciousness at that time, the person should be able to recollect the object or the objects he was conscious of at that time. When we question him whether he was conscious of this or that or any other object at that time, he replies in the negative. When we ask him further whether he was at least conscious of himself at that time, he says, "I was not conscious of myself either" (*māmapi ahaṁ no jñātavān*). In the context, the term "myself" can only mean the knowing subject (*ahamartha*) which is

different from *prājña*.[90] It means that there was only consciousness then which was not aware of itself as the "knowing subject".

What emerges from the foregoing account is that consciousness reveals objects if they are present, and that when there are no objects to be revealed, consciousness remains alone. It is, therefore, wrong to say that consciousness by its very nature is intentional. Consciousness becomes intentional only as a result of its association with the mind in waking and dream experience. But in deep sleep experience, mind as mind is absent, with the result that consciousness remains without being intentional. So intentionality is not essential (*svābhāvika*), but only adventitious (*aupādhika*), to consciousness. This may be stated in a different way as follows: while it is true that there is no phenomenon without consciousness, there is no phenomenological evidence to say that there is no consciousness without a phenomenon.

It is true that when a person recollects his experience of deep sleep he states it in a relational way involving three factors (*tripuṭī*), *viz* the cognizer, cognition, and the object cognized. He says, "I slept happily," "I was not conscious of anything," "I did not know even myself then." When he gives expression to his experience, he cannot but begin with the first person singular, and his sentence which purports to report about something has to be relational. Only when the mind functions in its usual way is it possible to have the notion of "I" (*aham*), or the notion of "this" (*idam*) with which the "I" is related. Since the mind functions in its usual way in the waking state, we have the relational knowledge (*viśiṣṭa-jñāna*). If it were the case that in deep sleep also there is relational experience, the person who is in deep sleep should have the experience in that way. That is, he should have the experience at that time such as, "I am conscious of happiness," "I am conscious of ignorance," and so on. The evidence based on the recollection, however, shows that consciousness remains as one and undifferentiated at that time, *i. e.* it is *ekībhūta*.[91] It is not relational at that time just because the mind *as the mind* is not functioning there. The paradox here is that

90. *Prājña* is the name given to the Self in deep sleep.

91. See *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 5, and Śaṅkara's commentary thereon.

deep sleep is what it is only because of the absence of *tripuṭī* therein, and the experience wherein there is *tripuṭī* is not deep sleep.

It is no argument to say that in deep sleep there is *tripuṭī* even though one is not conscious of it. One can speak about *tripuṭī* only when it is experienced, as for example, when a person says, "I see a tree." The *tripuṭī* is such that it exists only at the time of its experience. It, therefore, makes no sense to say that in deep sleep there is *tripuṭī* even though there is no experience of it by the concerned person at that time. It means that in deep sleep consciousness remains without being intentional, just because there is no functioning of the mind as the mind in association with consciousness. It will be relevant in this connection to refer to the explanation of the nature of consciousness in the state of deep sleep given by Śaṅkara. Consciousness in the state of deep sleep is called *prājña* because it is consciousness undifferentiated and non-relational (*prajñapti-mātram*), but in the other two states, it becomes intentional, relational, *i.e.* it is *viśiṣṭa-vijñānam*.

Rāmānuja argues that there is no consciousness devoid of objects on the ground that "nothing of this kind is ever known" (*na ca nirviṣayā kācit samvidasti, anupalabdheḥ*). Let us examine the reason adduced by him in support of his contention. The reason given by him is, first of all, untenable, for consciousness can never be known at all; that is, consciousness is never an object of knowledge like stocks and stones. Only if it were an object of knowledge, Rāmānuja would be justified in his view that a consciousness devoid of objects does not exist on the ground that it is not known. Secondly, an entity which is said to be non-existent must have been known, otherwise one cannot speak of it as non-existent. When Rāmānuja speaks of the non-existence of consciousness devoid of objects (*nirviṣaya-jñānābhāva*), "consciousness devoid of objects" which is the *pratiyogin* must have been known. The general principle is that negation presupposes affirmation. Without the prior affirmation of the *pratiyogin*, its negation is not possible. If so, one should have known this "consciousness devoid of objects" before one speaks of its non-existence. How, then, can Rāmānuja say that "consciousness devoid of objects" does not exist ?

12. UNTENABILITY OF THE DUALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AS SUBSTANTIVE AND ATTRIBUTIVE

According to Rāmānuja, consciousness, on the one hand, is related to an object which is transcendent to it and is, on the other hand, related to a subject in which it inheres as its attribute. The subject to which it is related is the self, which, according to Rāmānuja, is of the nature of consciousness. So we have the duality of consciousness—consciousness as the substantive called *dharmibhūta-jñāna* and consciousness as an attribute called *dharmabhūta-jñāna*. We shall now examine the duality of consciousness as formulated here.

There are many difficulties in relating one consciousness with another in terms of substance-attribute relation. Let us first of all look at the problem in this way. Is there any difference *qualitatively* between the two consciousnesses or not? If qualitatively there is no difference between the two, then *dharmibūta-jñāna* just because it is also consciousness, should require a locus. What, then, is its locus? If it be said that it is another consciousness which serves as its locus, the latter too requires another consciousness for its locus just because it is consciousness, and so on, leading to infinite regress (*anavasthā*). If it be said that the two are qualitatively different with the result that, while *dharmabhūta-jñāna* requires a locus, *dharmibhūta-jñāna* does not require a locus, then it amounts to admitting the existence of consciousness for which there is no locus. This is, indeed, what the Advaitin claims. Further, if the self is consciousness, and if consciousness is self-luminous, then the self which is said to be *dharmibhūta-jñāna* need not have consciousness as its attribute, for whatever work the latter can do, the former too can do. Consciousness, according to Rāmānuja's definition, is "instrumental in proving its own object by its own being" (*anubhūtitvam-nāma svasattayāiva svaviṣayasādhanatvam*)[92] and this must be true of *dharmi-jñāna*, just because it is consciousness. If so, why another consciousness, which is said to be its *dharma*? If it be said that this definition of consciousness is applicable only to *dharmabhūta-jñāna*, then why should the self be said to be of the nature of consciousness? If *dharmabhūta-jñāna* is necessary, then the self need not be conceived as consciousness

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92. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 57.

by its very nature (*cidrūpa*). In the case of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, consciousness is a separable attribute of the self; and so it may be said that the self of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika remains insentient (*jaḍa*) when there is no consciousness in it. This difficulty, however, cannot arise in the position of Rāmānuja, for consciousness which is said to be the *dharma* of the self is eternal, and also its essential and inseparable attribute. If so, the self is made sentient by this consciousness which is its essential, inseparable, eternal attribute. Where, then, is the need to admit of another consciousness as constituting the very nature of the self ?

The concept of *dharmabhūta-jñāna* as formulated in the system is not free from difficulties. *Dharmabhūta-jñāna* is said to be eternal, though it is subject to contraction and expansion (*saṅkoca* and *vikāśa*). The difficulty here is that an entity which is subject to change of states such as contraction and expansion cannot be eternal. Further, *dharmabhūta-jñāna* is said to be both a substance and an attribute. If it is an attribute by virtue of its inherence in the self, it cannot at the same time be a substance. There is yet another difficulty. Is the self, we ask, a *dravya* or not according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitin ? If the answer is the former—in fact, in the classification of categories the self is brought under the class of *dravya* by the Viśiṣṭādvaitin[93]—how can the self which is itself a *jñāna-dravya* possess another *jñāna* which is said to be a *dravya* ? If one *jñāna-dravya* (here, the self) can possess another *jñāna-dravya* (here, *dharmabhūta-jñāna*), then the latter, by virtue of being a *jñāna-dravya* could possess another *jñāna-dravya* and so on, leading to infinite regress. If, in order to avoid this difficulty, it be said that the self is not a *dravya*, then the Viśiṣṭādvaitin will have no claim to say that the self is *saguṇa*. What possesses qualities is a *dravya*, and since the self has qualities, it must be a *dravya*. So much will do with regard to *dharmabhūta-jñāna* and its relation to the self which is *dharmi-jñāna*.

It is necessary at this stage to make a brief reference to the distinction between *svarūpa-jñāna* and *vṛtti-jñāna* drawn by the Advaitin. When superficially viewed, it may appear that the Advaitin also, like the

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93. See Śrīnivāsadāsa, *Yatīndramatadīpikā*, ed. Swami Adidevananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1967, pp. 2 and 3.

Viśiṣṭādvaitin, speaks of the duality of *jñāna, viz svarūpa-jñāna* which is only another name for the Self in Advaita and *vṛtti-jñāna* through which objects are known. It is wrong to think that the *dharmabhūta-jñāna* is the Viśiṣṭādvaita counterpart of the *vṛtti-jñāna* of the Advaitin. There is a world of difference between the two concepts. Consciousness or knowledge reflected in the mental mode is termed *vṛtti-jñāna*.[94] Unlike *dharmabhūta-jñāna, vṛtti-jñāna* which has both origination and end is not eternal. It is not *caitanya* as such. Nor is it just a mode of the mind. Mind, being material, cannot through its modes reveal objects, but *vṛtti-jñāna* reveals objects. So consciousness or knowledge reflected in the mode of the mind is called *vṛtti-jñāna*. Though the Self which is consciousness always reveals objects, if present, in a general way, it is only when it is reflected in the mental mode that we can speak of objects as being known, that we can claim to have knowledge of objects. Since *vṛtti-jñāna* is different from the Self which is *svarūpa-jñāna*, the Advaitin says that it is *mithyā* so far as its ontological status is concerned. The Self alone is consciousness or knowledge. If the Advaitin speaks of *vṛtti-jñāna*, it is only in the figurative sense (*vṛttau-jñānatva upacārāt*).[95]

13. THERE IS NO CONSCIOUSNESS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Advaita, consciousness is only one. It is not at all relational by its very nature. Its essential nature is such that it requires neither an object to which it is related nor a locus for its support.

It is through consciousness that everything, whether it is an object in the external world, or one's own body, whether it is a mental state like pleasure or pain, or mind itself, is known. By itself the mind, *i.e.* the internal organ, which is material cannot reveal anything. If it gets the status of the knower, it is because of the association of consciousness with that. The mind appears to be of the nature of consciousness, though in truth it is different from consciousness. Hence if we speak of mental-consciousness (*vṛtti-jñāna*), it is only in the figurative sense. So everything including the mind is known through conscious-

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94. "*vṛttipratiphalitacaitanyam vṛttijñānam.*"

95. See Dharmarāja, *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, ed. S.S.S. Sastri, Adyar : The Adyar Library, 1942, p. 8.

ness. And this involves the distinction between consciousness on the one hand and what-is-not consciousness on the other. It is the distinction between "consciousness" and a "thing". While a thing or an object is known or established through consciousness, consciousness is not known or established through anything else. Consciousness is self-established because, unlike a "thing", it is self-luminous. And it is self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) in the sense that, while it is not revealed by any other means or agency, it reveals other things (*ananya-avabhāsyatve sati svetarasarva-avabhāsakatvam svayamprakāśatvam*). If consciousness is also known, *i.e.* if there is consciousness of consciousness, it would cease to be consciousness; *i.e.* it would be a "thing", it would be other than consciousness.

It is here that we have to consider the problem of the cognizability of consciousness. If it is argued that consciousness is known, what is it, we must ask, that knows consciousness? Three alternatives are possible in this connection. It can be said (1) that something other than consciousness knows consciousness, (2) that consciousness is known through another consciousness, and (3) that consciousness knows itself.

Of these three alternatives, the first one is inadmissible. Anything other than consciousness is insentient; and so consciousness can never be known by what is other than consciousness.

The second alternative, *viz* that consciousness is known through another consciousness, may now be considered. The Naiyāyika, for example, argues that when a tree is seen, there is the consciousness to the effect, "This is a tree." When someone asks, "What do you see?" I reflect on the cognitive situation and say, "I see a tree." According to the Naiyāyika, it is the reflective consciousness called *anuvyavasāya-jñāna* that reveals the original consciousness and its object, *viz* the tree. Two difficulties which arise in the Nyāya position may be stated here. First of all, it is not the original consciousness that is the content of the subsequent consciousness. What the *anuvyavasāya-jñāna* reveals is the knownness (*jñātatā*) of the tree in this case, and not the consciousness of the tree. Secondly, consciousness which is self-luminous needs nothing else to make it manifest. Only if there could be unknownness in the case of consciousness, there is the need

for another consciousness for the purpose of revealing the original consciousness. It may be mentioned here that though Sartre makes such a distinction between the pre-reflective and the reflective consciousness, he does not hold the view that one consciousness is the object of another consciousness; and the Sartrean position here is similar to that of the Prābhākara.

In a different way Rāmānuja argues that consciousness can be an object of another consciousness, as for example, when we say, "At one time I was conscious of that object," referring to one's own past state of consciousness.[96] Two explanations may be given by way of answer to Rāmānuja's argument. When I say, "This is a tree." it is the tree in front that is the object of my consciousness. Similarly when I say, "At one time I was conscious of a tree," it is the tree associated with the past time, or the knownness of the tree, that is the object of my consciousness now. It does not follow in any case that my past state of consciousness is the object of my present state of consciousness. Secondly, any reference to consciousness as "past" and "present" is intelligible only with regard to *vṛtti-jñāna*. Since *vṛttis* or the mental modes come one after another, consciousness associated with the *vṛtti* seems to be limited in terms of temporal dimensions. While *vṛtti* is revealed by consciousness, the latter is not revealed by anything else.

The difficulty involved in the view according to which consciousness is an object of another consciousness may be brought out in another way. If it is argued for the purpose of the cognizability of consciousness that one consciousness is the object of another consciousness, then by the same logic we have to say that, for cognizing the second consciousness a third one is required, and so on, leading to infinite regress (*anavasthā*). If, for the purpose of avoiding infinite regress, it is said that the second consciousness is known by the first, there arises the defect of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśraya*). If it be said that the second consciousness is known by itself, it amounts to holding the view that one and the same consciousness is both the subject and the object at the same time, which is untenable (*karma-kartṛbhāva-virodha*). And this would

96. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 56.: "*svānubhavasyāpi atītasya 'ajñāsiṣam' iti jñānaviṣayatva-darśanācca.*"

eliminate the third alternative mentioned earlier, *viz* that consciousness knows itself. So it does not make sense to say that 'consciousness is an object of another consciousness.

The question whether consciousness is cognizable or not, known or not known, does not arise at all. Only with regard to a "thing" which is insentient it is intelligible to say that it is known or not known. Consciousness, which is immediate and direct, which is no other than the inward Self of the individual, is different, indeed, from both the known and the unknown, as a text of the *Kena Upaniṣad* puts it.[97] Its nature is such that, while it reveals other things when they are present, it does not require anything else for its manifestation; and it is in this sense that it is said to be *svaprakāśa*.

14. EXAMINATION OF RĀMĀNUJA'S DEFINITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the light of what has been said above about the nature of consciousness from the Advaita point of view, let us consider Rāmānuja's definition of consciousness. Rāmānuja says: "The essential nature of consciousness is such that it manifests itself through its own being to its own substrate at the present moment."[98] This definition is not satisfactory for several reasons. First of all, it is a case of too wide definition, for this definition is equally applicable to the state of happiness. Happiness is such that it manifests itself through its own being to its own substrate (*viz* the individual) at the present moment. A subjective state such as happiness is directly known at the time when it exists. One cannot say that one does not know it, even though it exists. It is a case where existence and perception are coeval. We perceive it as it exists, and it exists only when it is perceived.[99] Secondly, what does it mean to say that "consciousness manifests itself through its own being to its own substrate"? If it means that it reveals itself to the self which is the substrate, then it is both the revealer and the

97. I, 4.

98 *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 57 : "*anubhūtitvam nāma vartamānadaśāyām svasattayaiva svāśrayaṁprati prakāśamānatvam.*"

99. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid*, p 67 : "*sukham hi vartamānadaśāyām svāśrayam puruṣam prati svasattayaiva prakāśate, aprakāśamānasukhasattā'bhāvāt.*"

revealed at the same time, which is untenable. If it means that when knowledge arises the person knows that he has knowledge, then we have to speak of the first order knowledge and the second order knowledge. The knowledge that he has knowledge is the second order knowledge. The second order knowledge requires the first order knowledge, and the first order knowledge to be known requires the second order knowledge. And so there arises the fallacy of *anyonyāśraya*. Thirdly, since consciousness has no substrate or locus at all, the expression "to its own substrate" (*svāśrayam prati*) contained in the definition is untenable. It is no argument to say that the self is the substrate of consciousness. The self itself is consciousness; and so they cannot be related as substance and attribute. The Advaitin, therefore, holds the view that consciousness *per se* is non-relational. In fact, the question of relation will arise only if there is a second to it; but there is no second to it. However, it becomes relational when, due to *avidyā*, there arises the subject-object distinction. So the relational nature of consciousness is *aupādhika* and not *svābhāvika*.

15. THE PROBLEM OF ŚRUTI VERSUS PERCEPTION

15.1. *No conflict between one pramāṇa and another pramāṇa*

One of the points urged in favour of the synthetic character of Rāmānuja's philosophy is the equal validity accorded to all the three *pramāṇas* — *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and *śruti* — by the system. The three *pramāṇas*, it is said, are coherent and not contradictory. The point very much emphasized by the Viśiṣṭādvaitin is that *śruti* as a *pramāṇa* is not and cannot be at variance with *pratyakṣa*. I propose to pay some attention to this problem of the relation between *śruti* and *pratyakṣa* as it has a bearing on metaphysical issues.

Besides *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *śabda*, the Advaitin accepts three more *pramāṇas*, *viz upamāna*, *arthāpatti* and *anupalabdhi*. Drawing a line of demarcation between *śruti* on the one hand and the other *pramāṇas* on the other, the Advaitin says that *śruti*, and *śruti* alone, is the *pramāṇa* with regard to the trans-empirical Brahman, and that *pramāṇas* such as *pratyakṣa* give us knowledge of things empirical. In other words, while the scope of *śruti* is restricted to the trans-empirical, that of perception and other *pramāṇas* is confined to the empirical. Consequently there is no question of conflict between *śruti* and

other *pramāṇas*. What is known through perception does not fall within the scope of *śruti*; and what is revealed by *śruti* is outside the sphere of perception and other *pramāṇas*. Difficulty will arise only when there is an act of trespass by one *pramāṇa* into the territory of another. *Śruti* will not be considered to be authoritative if it pronounces its judgments on things empirical contrary to our day-to-day experience. As Śaṅkara puts it, "Even a hundred *śruti* texts which declare fire to be cold or non-luminous will not attain authoritativeness."[100] Nor can perception or any other *pramāṇa* have validity when it speaks about the nature of the ultimate reality. The Advaitin not only accepts the validity of each *pramāṇa*, but also emphasizes the absence of conflict among them. Śaṅkara observes: "One *pramāṇa* does not contradict another, for it only tells us about those things that cannot be known through other means."[101]

Śaṅkara discusses the problem whether one *pramāṇa* can contradict another *pramāṇa* in the course of his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II, i, 20. The discussion is important for two reasons. It first of all shows that there is no conflict between the testimony of *śruti* and that of other *pramāṇas*. It also shows how the truth of non-duality as argued on the basis of *śruti* cannot be questioned or set aside by means of other *pramāṇas*. The Logician who is the critic here argues that the *Upaniṣadic* view that Brahman is the only reality contradicts not only the evidence of perception and inference, but also other *Upaniṣadic* texts. Perception, he argues, shows the existence of a plurality of objects such as sound, smell, etc. So how can it be said that Brahman is the only reality ignoring the evidence of perception? Further, by means of inference we establish that the *jīvas* or individual souls that perceive sound and other objects are different in different bodies. It means that there is a plurality of *jīvas* or individual souls; and so ignoring the evidence of inference it is wrong to say, so the critic argues, that Brahman is the only reality. The critic further argues that the *Upaniṣadic* view that Brahman is the only reality is contradicted by other passages of *śruti*. There are

100. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII, 66.

101. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II, i, 20: "*na ca pramāṇam pramāṇāntareṇa virudhyate. pramāṇāntara aviṣayameva hi pramāṇāntaram jñāpayati.*"

śruti texts which say that "One who desires villages must sacrifice" "One who desires heaven must sacrifice", and so on. What is evident here is that the objects desired such as villages, animals and heaven are different from men who resort to the means of obtaining them. It means that besides *jīvas* there is a plurality of things. So the critic concludes that Brahman cannot be the only reality. On the contrary, we have to admit a plurality of *jīvas* and objects.

Śaṅkara rejects the above argument on the ground that the non-dual nature of the reality as shown by the *Upaniṣads* is contradicted neither by perception nor by inference. He asks: "Does the existence of a plurality of objects such as sound apprehended through perception contradict the oneness of ether? If it does not, then there is no contradiction in our position with perception."[102] The point to be borne in mind here is that the oneness of the transcendent reality as shown by *śruti* is not inconsistent with the plurality of empirical reality. Perception as a *pramāṇa* has only empirical validity (*vyāvahārikam prāmāṇyam*). While the Advaitin is second to none in affirming the pluralistic universe at the empirical level, he denies, in contradistinction to what is affirmed by the rank pluralists and the pseudo-monists, that the pluralistic universe is ultimately real.

Śaṅkara argues that the existence of a plurality of *ātman* cannot be proved by means of inference. Before showing that this cannot be established by inference, Śaṅkara ridicules the Logician by saying that he could as well maintain that every individual is multiple. He asks: who is it that performs or works out this inference? The Logician, of course, will reply that neither the body, nor the senses, nor the mind, nor the self, can by itself do this work of inference. On the contrary, inference is the work of the self joined to its accessories such as the body, the senses, and the mind, for every action, it is held by the critic, depends on many factors (*anekakāraka-sādhyā hi kriyā*); and inference also is an action. The result is that everyone of us, we must say, is multiple — a conclusion which is neither desirable nor tenable. Now Śaṅkara comes out with his banter on the Logician: "Oh the dexterity in inference shown by these bulls of Logicians who lack only a tail and horns!"[103] The ridicule apart, the point which Śaṅkara

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*

urges against the critic is that inference is out of question for establishing the difference among the *jīvas*, because the self has no characteristic that might be used to infer natural differences between one self and another. We distinguish one *jīva* from another, not on the basis of any intrinsic differentiating feature in the self, but only on the basis of the limiting adjuncts, which mark off one *jīva* from another. Śaṅkara observes: "Not even hundreds of Logicians who admit differences in the self owing to limiting adjuncts, can show any characteristic of it that would lead one to infer difference between one self and another. And as for natural differences, they are out of question, for the self is not an object of inference."[104]

Hundreds of things such as villages, animals and heaven, which are empirically real and which we would like to achieve as ends in themselves due to *avidyā* are not ultimately real. They are, observes Śaṅkara, names and forms, subject to origin and dissolution; and so they are not eternal. Being different from Brahman, they are *mithyā*.

What emerges from the foregoing discussion is this. There is no conflict between *pramāṇas*, and the evidence of *śruti* which is concerned with the trans-empirical reality is not at variance with the evidence of perception and other *pramāṇas*.

15. 2. *Superiority of śruti over perception*

We have already said that perception as a *pramāṇa* has its scope restricted to the empirical order. However, owing to the inherent defect in it caused by *avidyā*, it is incapacitated from revealing the nature of the ultimate reality. Its defective nature and its claim to empirical validity are not at all opposed to each other. In so far as perception reveals mere being (*sanmātram*), it is valid. It is only when it shows the manifold objects and claims that they are ultimately real that its evidence is set aside by *śruti*. *Bheda*, we have already said, is *durnirūpa*. The point to be emphasized here is that the Advaitin does not say that perception as such is contradicted by *śruti*. But he only says that erroneous perception is sublated by *śruti*.

Śruti is *apauruṣeya*; and so it is free from defects such as error associated with the human agency. But perception cannot claim any

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104. *Ibid*.

such immunity. Cases of perceptual error are well-known. If perception is known to betray us in some cases, it is quite possible, one may argue, that it misleads us in all cases. Further, consider the way in which we wrongly identify ourselves with the body, the senses, and the mind, and superimpose their qualities on the Self as when we say, "I am stout," "I am blind," "I am happy," and so on. But *śruti* tells us that the Self is neither stout nor blind nor lean and that the ascription of the qualities of the not-Self on the Self due to *adhyāsa* caused by *avidyā* is wrong, and sets aside the evidence of perception which is to the contrary. While we are able to question the evidence of perception on the basis of *śruti*, we cannot question *śruti* on the basis of perception. We cannot even suspect the possibility of defect in *śruti* which is *apauruṣeya*. It is *śruti* that tells us that the non-dual Brahman is the truth and that plurality is false. Consider the following texts. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says that Being or Brahman "is one only without a second" (*ekameva advitīyam*),[105] and that "It is real" (*tat satyam*).[106] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says that "Everything else but this (Brahman) is perishable" (*tato anyat ārtam*).[107] It also says that "He who sees diversity goes from death to death" and that "There is no plurality whatsoever here".[108] Rāmānuja says that the Advaita position involves the fallacy of *anyonyāśraya* because the untenability of *bheda* is sought to be proved on the ground that *śruti* teaches the truth of non-duality and that the Scriptural truth of non-duality is sought to be established on the ground that *bheda* is unreal.[109] However, there is no room for the alleged fallacy of *anyonyāśraya* because the Advaitin says that the truth of non-duality as well as the falsity of *bheda* is known through *śruti* itself. This will be obvious from the several texts cited above.

There is yet another objection raised by Rāmānuja against the Advaita view that *śruti* sublates perception. According to the Advaitin, the empirical state which involves distinctions such as

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105. VI, ii, 1.
106. VI, viii, 7.
107. III, iv, 2.
108. IV, iv, 19.
109. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, (Uttamur edition), p. 85.

subject and object, Scripture and its teaching, the teacher and the taught, is due to *avidyā*. All the *pramāṇas* including *śruti* function only at the empirical level which presupposes *avidyā*. *Śruti* is needed by one who does not know the truth of non-duality. Even for the non-Advaitins, Śaṅkara observes, *śruti* has a purpose only in the state of bondage and not in the state of liberation.[110] The *Upaniṣad* itself says that to one who has realized the truth, the *Vedas* are no *Vedas*.[111] If both *śruti* and perception are thus conditioned by *avidyā*, both of them, argues Rāmānuja, are equally defective. If so, how can the Advaitin say that *śruti* sublates perception?[112] This argument is wrong. The Advaitin does not place *śruti* and perception on a footing of equality. Though *śruti* as a *pramāṇa* functions, like perception, at the empirical level of *avidyā*, there is a speciality in *śruti* which not only serves to distinguish it from perception, but also contributes to its superior status. *Śruti*, we have already stated, is *apauruṣeya*, and so it is free from defects such as non-apprehension, mis-apprehension, etc., which arise because of the human agency. Dependent as it is on the human agency (*puruṣa-tantra*), perception is open to objection in this way. So *śruti* is competent to set aside perception, if and when the latter out-steps its limit.

Also, on the basis of the *apaccheda-nyāya*, the Advaitin argues that *śruti* will hold good when it conflicts with perception. Perceptual knowledge comes first; knowledge of the non-dual reality conveyed by *śruti* comes later. When two cognitions, with reference to the same object, are related as earlier and later and when they are opposed, the subsequent cognition sublates the earlier cognition.[113] Just as the subsequent cognition of shell even as it arises sublates the earlier cognition of silver, even so the knowledge of the non-dual reality as soon as it arises from *śruti* sublates the perceptual cognition of duality. By applying the principle of the subsequent sublating the earlier called *apaccheda-nyāya*, the Advaitin says that in case of conflict the evidence of perception has to be set aside by that of *śruti*.

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110. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, XIII, 2.

111. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV, iii, 22.

112. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), pp. 55-56.

113. See *Mīmāṁsā-sūtra*, VI, v, 54: "*paurvāparye pūrvadaurbalyam prakṛtivat*."

According to Advaita, *śruti*, though *aparamārtha*, is nevertheless the *pramāṇa* which gives us the knowledge of the real Brahman. Rāmānuja criticises this standpoint of Advaita. To quote Rāmānuja: "It cannot be maintained that the knowledge of Brahman which is real can be derived from Scripture which is not real."[114] There are two issues involved here which have to be kept apart, if we are to answer this objection of Rāmānuja. There is one issue relating to *śruti* being a *pramāṇa*. The other issue is about the ontological status of *śruti*. Since the issues are different, the criteria formulated by the Advaitin in this regard are different. *Śruti* is admitted to be a *pramāṇa* because it conveys a valid cognition (*pramā*) whose content remains unsublated. Being eternal, there is no possibility of Brahman which is the content of the knowledge conveyed by *śruti* being sublated at any time. Non-sublatability of the content is the criterion of a valid cognition.[115] *Śruti*, in so far as it gives rise to a valid cognition, is a *pramāṇa*. Brahman alone is real, that is, *paramārtha* or *satya*; anything other than Brahman is not *paramārtha*. *Śruti*, being different from Brahman and serving as a *pramāṇa* to an ignorant man in the state of bondage, can only be *aparamārtha* (*i.e.* not real) so far as its ontological status is concerned. Its not being real in its ontological status does not incapacitate it from being a *pramāṇa*, for the two—its not-real status and its being a *pramāṇa*—are not incompatible. What is not real can and does give rise to the knowledge of the real. The figure of a snake drawn on a paper, for example, gives rise to the knowledge of the real (*i.e.* empirically real) snake. The cognition of of a rope-snake which is not real gives rise to fear, trembling, loss of speech, etc., which are (empirically) real. In the same way, *śruti*, which is not real, can give rise to the cognition of Brahman which is real.

16. EXAMINATION OF THE METAPHYSICS OF RĀMĀNUJA

16.1. *Śaṅkara's main objections against Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya*

The monism-pluralism of Rāmānuja is entirely different from the pluralism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the dualism-pluralism of Sāṅkhya.

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114. *Śrī-bhāṣya* (Uttamur edition), p. 88: "*asatyāt śāstrāt satyabrahmaviṣayapratipattiḥ durupapādā*."

115. Rāmarāyakavi, *ibid.*, p. 123: "*abādhitārthaviṣayam jñānam hi pramā*."

The three entities, Brahman, *cit*, and *acit*, though distinct, constitute an organismic whole in such a way that both *cit* and *acit* have a dependent existence on Brahman, according to Rāmānuja. Brahman as qualified by *cit* and *acit* is one; or Brahman as embodied in *cit* and *acit* is one; and the term "*viśiṣṭādvaita*" means the non-dualism of the qualified or the the embodied. Before we go into the details with regard to Rāmānuja's explanation of the relation between Brahman on the one hand and *cit* and *acit* on the other through his doctrine of causality and soul-body relation, we shall indicate how the major objections which Śaṅkara levels against Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya cannot be straight away applied to the monism-pluralism of Rāmānuja.

One major objection which Śaṅkara raises against Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is in respect of the doctrine of the causality of the world.[116] According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the atoms are the material cause of the world, and God is only the efficient cause. The world comes into existence as a result of the combination of the atoms, two atoms forming a dyad, three dyads forming a triad, four dyads forming a tetrad and so on. Such a combination of atoms to form aggregates takes place in all the four kinds of atoms, though the atoms of air are the first to be set in motion by *adṛṣṭa*, the unseen principle. Śaṅkara's main objection is that the atoms cannot be the first cause of the world as the explanation of the combination of atoms in terms of *adṛṣṭa* which is non-intelligent is untenable. His other major objection is directed against the category of *samavāya*[117] which, though different from other categories, is credited with the power of relating the other categories which are different from one another. If we leave out the negative category of *abhāva*, there are six positive categories admitted by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. *Guṇa* which is one category exists in *dravya*, which is another category. Though they are different, they are related through *samavāya*. In the same way, *karma* which is a separate category, inheres in *dravya* through *samavāya* relation. So according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, *dravya* is that in which a quality or an action can exist through *samavāya* relation, though it is different from both quality and action and also from *samavāya* which relates them.

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116. Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, II, ii, 12.

117. *Ibid.*, II, ii, 13.

Sāmānya and *viśeṣa, i.e.* the universal and the particular, reside in their substrata by *samavāya* relation. So according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the six categories which have different characteristics are absolutely different from one another.

Side by side with this doctrine of absolute difference among the categories, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika also accepts the theory of dependence of one thing on another—of qualities in a substance, of the whole in its parts, the universal in the individual, and so on. The real difficulty is how things which are absolutely different can be said to depend on each other.[118] Further, if the relation of dependence is such that, if a substance exists, qualities exist, and if a substance does not exist, qualities do not exist, what really exists, says Śaṅkara, is only substance. And according to the way in which it exists, it may be called by different names and understood through different concepts, just as one and the same individual, Devadatta, will be the object of different conceptions and names such as a man, a youth, and so on, depending on the conditions in which he is.[119] Further, the conception as well as the work of the category of *samavāya* as presented by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika involves several difficulties; and Śaṅkara brings out the untenability of the concept in several ways. Once the category of *samavāya* is thrown out, the entire metaphysical structure of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tumbles down. It may be mentioned here that Rāmānuja too, like Śaṅkara, rejects the category of *samavāya.*[120]

The problem is different in the case of Sāṅkhya. Unlike Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya traces the physical universe to a single source, *viz prakṛti* which is insentient and independent. Śaṅkara argues at great length on the basis of both *śruti* and reasoning that *prakṛti* as conceived by the Sāṅkhya philosopher cannot be the first cause of the world.[121] Unless the Sāṅkhya philosopher accepts an intelligent principle to guide and control *prakṛti* and make *prakṛti* a dependent principle, the creation of the universe from *prakṛti* can never be accounted for. *Puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as conceived in this system are

118. *Ibid.*, II, ii, 17.
119. *Ibid.*
120. *Śrī-bhāṣya.* II, ii, 12.
121. See Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra*, I, i, 5-11 and II, i, 1-10.

altogether separate and independent; the one is intelligent and indifferent, and the other is inert and independent, and so there cannot be any co-operative work between them. Nor is there a third principle to connect the two, and make them work together. Therefore, the Sāṅkhya account of *prakṛti* as the first cause of the world is untenable. It is against this background that we have to examine Rāmānuja's account of Brahman's causality of the world and his explanation of the soul-body relation between Brahman on the one hand and *cit* and *acit* on the other.

16.2. *Elucidation of Rāmānuja's position*

Rāmānuja does not trace the world to a plurality of atoms which, according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, constitute the material cause. Nor does he admit *prakṛti*, as Sāṅkhya does, as the material cause of the world. On the contrary, he holds the view that Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause rolled into one (*abhinna-nimittopādāna-kāraṇa*). Unlike the atoms of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the *prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya, the *acit* of Rāmānuja, though distinct from Brahman, is not an independent principle capable of functioning on its own. It is dependent on, and inseparably related to, Brahman all the time. So Rāmānuja's position, as it is, in not exposed to the same objections which have been levelled against both Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya. It is necessary to go into some details with regard to Rāmānuja's position before we examine it from other points of view.

Rāmānuja accepts *satkārya-vāda*. He relies on the teaching of *sadvidyā* of the *Chāndogya* for the elucidation of his doctrine of causality and the *antaryāmin-brāhmaṇa* for the exposition of the soul-body relation between Brahman and *cit-acit*. According to Rāmānuja, the entire world of sentient and non-sentient beings constitute the body of Brahman. Brahman is always qualified by *cit* and *acit* both in the causal and effect conditions. There is, however, this difference between the causal state and the effect state—in the former, both *cit* and *acit* are in a subtle form, whereas in the latter they are in a gross form. It means that Brahman with *cit* and *acit* remaining in the subtle form is the cause, and Brahman with *cit* and *acit* in their gross form is the effect (*sūkṣma-cidacidviśiṣṭam-brahma kāraṇam, sthūla-cidacidviśiṣṭam-brahma kāryam*). There are not two

entirely different substances in the causal and effect states. Rāmānuja explains the position as follows: "That the same substance is the cause and is the effect in another state, and that by the understanding of that substance in its causal state we understand it as existing in another state also owing to the continuity of substance, are the principles that are explained to Śvetaketu with illustrations."[122] In another passage he says: "That the entire aggregate of sentient and non-sentient beings, gross and subtle, in their effected or causal state, constitutes the body of the highest Brahman, and that, on the other hand, the highest Brahman constitutes their self—this is proved by the *antaryāmin-brāhmaṇa* and similar texts."[123]

Though Rāmānuja's position is more like *Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda*, he does not, strictly speaking, subscribe to this theory. Though Brahman is said to be the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world, it is not, according to Rāmānuja, subject to change. Nor do the imperfections of the world belong to Brahman, the material cause. That Brahman is free from change and imperfections is stated by Rāmānuja as follows: "All change and all imperfection belong only to the beings constituting Brahman's body, and Brahman itself is thus proved to be free from all imperfection, a treasure as it were of all imaginable sacred qualities."[124] It means that Rāmānuja assigns the changes to *prakṛti* and the imperfections to the *jīva* and thereby makes Brahman free from changes and imperfections (*prakārabhūta - prakṛtyaṁśe vikāraḥ, prakārabhūta-jīvāṁśe sarve ca apuruṣārthaḥ*).[125]

16.3. *Difficulties in Rāmānuja's position*

Considering the way in which Rāmānuja explains the causality of the world, is it tenable to say that Brahman is the material cause of the world? The answer is in the negative. Rāmānuja says that Brahman qualified by *cit* and *acit* in their subtle form is the cause and Brahman qualified by *cit* and *acit* in their gross form is the effect. The same entity which is called the causal substance, Rāmānuja maintains, is called effect because of the change of state. From the

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122. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, tr. S. S. Raghavachar, Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Asrama, 1956, p. 31.
123. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, II, i, 15.
124. *Ibid.*
125. *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, p. 74.

foregoing explanation it will be obvious that there are three entities, *viz* Brahman, *cit* and *acit*, in the effect state (*kāryāvasthā*). It is, therefore, necessary to know whether Brahman, which is said to be the material cause, is the cause of only *cit* and *acit*, or whether it is the cause of Brahman alone, or whether it is the cause of all the three entities. It cannot be said that Brahman is the cause of *cit* and *acit*, for they exist, according to Rāmānuja, in a subtle form even before creation. What exists already cannot be created. The second alternative fares no better. For one thing, Brahman being eternal has neither origination nor end; and so it is wrong to say that Brahman is created. There is also another difficulty. Brahman is said to be the cause; and Brahman is also the effect. And this is absurd, because Brahman cannot be the cause of its own being. The third alternative is also untenable for the reasons stated above. We, therefore, fail to see how Brahman is the material cause in Rāmānuja's position. It is no argument to say that the *viśiṣṭa* is the cause of the *viśiṣṭa*. It is necessary on the part of the Viśiṣṭādvaitin to clarify what he means by *viśiṣṭa*. According to him, Brahman is *viśeṣya*, the qualified, and *cit* and *acit* are the *viśeṣaṇas*, the qualities. But there is no such thing as *viśiṣṭa* besides the qualified and the quality.

There is yet another difficulty. Rāmanuja says that "the cause itself by passing into a new state of being constitutes the effect" (*kāraṇameva avasthāntarāpannam kāryam ityucyate*).[126] When the cause itself is said to pass into a new state called the effect, what is it, we ask, that is subject to change? Of the three factors comprising the causal complex, Brahman, according to Rāmānuja, is not subject to transformation. If we leave out Brahman, *cit* and *acit* alone remain; and it is open to the Viśiṣṭādvaitin to say that *cit* and *acit* undergo transformation from the subtle to the gross state. But even this is untenable. *Cit*, being immutable, cannot be referred to as either subtle or gross. An object which is capable of transformation may be spoken of as subtle or gross. *Cit*, however, is not such an entity. Only *acit* which is insentient must be subject to change.[127] So when

126. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

127. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, II, i, 23.
Rāmānuja says: "There is no confusion of the different characteristic qualities; for liability to change belongs to non-sentient matter, liability to pain to sentient souls, and the possession of all excellent qualities to Brahman..."

Rāmānuja says that the causal substance passes into a new state called the effect, only *acit* undergoes transformation from the subtle to the gross state. If so, how could Rāmānuja say that the causal substance comprising Brahman, *cit* and *acit*, changes into a new state called the effect ? If Rāmānuja would admit that *acit* alone is subject to change and appears as the manifest world—and this is what he does—it would amount to the acceptance of the position of Advaita according to which *māyā* is the *pariṇāmyupādāna-kāraṇa* with this difference, *viz* that while *māyā* is *anirvacanīya* according to the Advaitin, *acit* is real according to the Viśiṣṭādvaitin. It is another question whether *acit* (which is the Viśiṣṭādvaita counterpart of *māyā* can be admitted to be real.

Rāmānuja explains the relation between Brahman on the one hand and *cit* and *acit* on the other in terms of soul-body relation.[128] According to him both *cit* and *acit* constitute the *śarīra* of Brahman. What, then, is Rāmānuja's conception of *śarīra* ? He defines *śarīra* in the following way : "Any substance which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purposes and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation is the body of that soul."[129] In this definition Rāmānuja emphasizes three aspects—the *ādheyatvam*, the *vidheyatvam* and the *śeṣatvam* of the body ; it means that what is supported and controlled by, and what exists in a subordinate relation to, the soul is the body.

It is difficult to understand how the *jīva* and the world can be the *śarīra* of Brahman. Let it be granted that the metaphysical teaching of *sadvidyā* of the *Chāndogya* shows that Brahman as the cause of the whole world is the ground or support (*ādhāra*) in the same way as clay which is the cause of pot is the ground or support thereof. We do not say that pot is the *śarīra* of clay notwithstanding the cause-effect relation between the two. In the same way, we cannot say that the world is the body of Brahman, even though Brahman is the cause of the world. Even if, for the sake of argument, we say that the physical universe is the body of Brahman, it cannot be said that the sentient *jīva* is the body of Brahman. Even if the *jīva* is viewed as an *aṁśa* or part of Brahman, as the Viśiṣṭādvaitin would say,[130] it

128. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, II, i, 9.
129. *Ibid*.
130. *Ibid*, II, iii, 42.

cannot be treated as the body of Brahman. This point can be made clear by means of an example. Consider the relation between a piece of cloth which is a whole and the threads which are parts thereof. We do not say that the threads constitute the body (*śarīra*) of the cloth just because there is the whole-part relation between them. According to Advaita, the real position is that the *jīva* is neither a part nor the body of Brahman, but Brahman itself, though it appears to be different from Brahman because of the limiting adjunct. Further, the *jīva* is atomic in size, according to Rāmānuja. Being atomic, it must be partless; and if it is partless, how can Brahman be immanent in it as its soul? If it be said that the soul-body relation between Brahman and the world of *cit* and *acit* must be viewed in a mystical sense, then it becomes a problem which cannot be discussed and analysed at the philosophical level. Nor can this soul-body analogy which is important to Rāmānuja be dismissed purely as figurative.

In view of the difficulties mentioned above, it is difficult to accept Rāmānuja's conception of the soul-body relation between Brahman on the one hand and *cit* and *acit* on the other. Even to view *cit* and *acit* as the attributes of Brahman, using the word "attribute" in a special sense, because of the inseparable relation between them, is rather difficult. Rāmānuja cites the relation between an attribute and a substance, as well as that between the body and the soul to show how things which are distinct are nevertheless identified. We say, for example, "Rose *is* red," and "I *am* a man". In view of the inseparable relation in these cases bordering on identity of the one with the other—the attribute with the substance and the body with the soul—Rāmānuja seems to think that we can view both *cit* and *acit* which are inseparably related to Brahman as the attributes of Brahman. This argument is not convincing. The relation between substance and attribute, when carefully examined, will turn out to be *anirvacanīya*. The *tādātmya* relation between body and soul as seen in our empirical usage "I am a man" is a case of *adhyāsa*. It may be doubted, as Hiriyanna has aptly remarked, that the grammar of language is the grammar of reality.[131]

131. See M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949, p. 179.